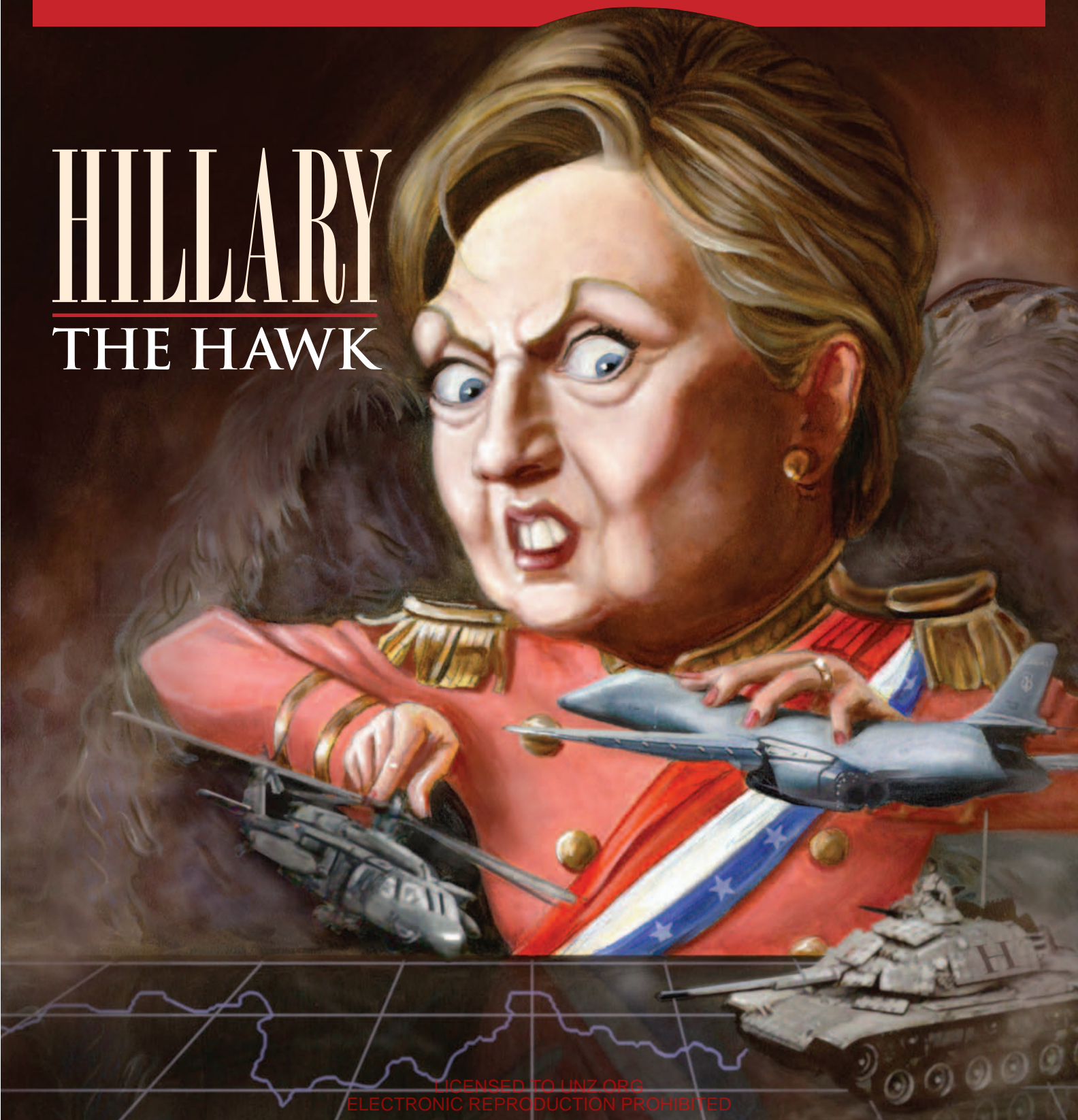


IRAN: MISSION IMPROBABLE ■ DUBAI DEBACLE ■ CHENEY'S LAW

MARCH 27, 2006

The American Conservative

HILLARY
THE HAWK



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FIGHTING OURSELVES

Finally, someone who will say what has needed to be said since the Cheney/Rumsfeld administration launched the U.S. on its moronic war on terror. Mr. Bacevich is absolutely right, and virtually everything this administration has done in response to 9/11 has been wrong (Feb. 27). If the truth be spoken, we cannot call this a war at all—and if it is a war, it is one in which we are only fighting ourselves.

While the U.S. spends billions of dollars transporting hundreds of thousands of troops and equipment halfway around the world, al-Qaeda and its supporters build homemade IEDs out of ordinary household products and deliver them on motorbikes for pennies. While the administration rants about American moral superiority and military supremacy, a bunch of mail-order electricians humiliate the great American military machine on a daily basis—except, that is, when it is busy humiliating itself by the slaughter of civilians.

Thus far this war on terror has only brought us chaos and death, increased the number of terrorists in the world, ratcheted up international tensions, exacerbated cultural and religious animosities, wasted enormous amounts of American wealth, driven America's standing in the world to levels somewhere below whale excrement, and rent the last tenuous strands of the American democracy. If this be American conservative governance, I'll take the liberals.
NORMAN MICHAEL HARMAN
Harpers Ferry, W.Va.

MUSLIM MANNERS

Mr. Buchanan's article captured and articulated the truth well (March 13). I truly appreciate his sensitivity. Please convey my appreciation.

Has anyone asked why Muslims have not mocked Jesus Christ or Moses in retaliation for Prophet Muhammad's caricature? The mobs burned embassies, flags, effigies, and chanted insults at

Western nations but not a single word against Jesus Christ or Moses. When an Iranian newspaper decided to "get even," it did not invite any insulting depiction of Moses or Christ, which would have been the natural and logical response.

The reason is that both Moses and Christ are regarded as Muslim prophets and worthy of respect. Their insulting depiction would be as offensive to Muslims as is Muhammad's, though the reaction would not have been as strong since they would expect Christians and Jews to respond to that.

The caricatures were initially published in September 2005. At that time, they did not attract much attention. A concerted effort was undertaken to provoke Muslims. It had more to do with a cynical and calculated move to insult than with so-called freedom of speech.
S. NIZAMANI
via e-mail

RIGHT AT HOME

Thank you for providing a home for my political beliefs. I came of age as a Reagan Democrat and registered Republican. Yet, as nearly a quarter century has passed, I have found myself increasingly "homeless": repulsed by the policies of the Democratic Party yet increasingly feeling like the Republican Party was moving away from my beliefs.

Your magazine has been a welcome affirmation that I am not alone. I am gravely concerned about America's vulnerability as so much of our economy is in the hands of foreign countries. For years it has been easy for politicians of both parties to follow variations of New Deal/Great Society philosophies because the financial consequences were so diluted over future generations. Now the piper is calling. If China wanted, it could greatly destabilize our economy. All the fiscal responsibility that attracted me to the Republican Party was hot air. The U.S. could never respond, as it did in World War II, to a truly all-out war. Too

much is outsourced or owned by foreign interests.

I also found myself homeless in the build-up to the Iraq War. I felt betrayed by the deceptions used by President Bush to justify the war and began to question how could I be conservative when *National Review* was singing the praises of the Bush Doctrine. Again, your magazine gave me comfort. I could be conservative and against the war. When the president can do absolutely nothing wrong in the eyes of the numerous neocon radio talk shows, it is refreshing to read your magazine.

I could go on—the erosion of culture due to unchecked illegal immigration and the educational communism of No Child Left Behind—but in the end, I thank you for providing a home.

JERRY BATCHA
Bethlehem, Penn.

TAKI'S BOOK CLUB

Every now and then, Taki writes about Ernest Hemingway. He's made me interested in reading Hemingway and so my question is: is there any chronological order to read them in so that I may appreciate and/or enjoy them more? Thanks, and keep up the good work!
SAM HENSHAW
Dallas, Texas

Taki replies:

I'd start with *The Sun Also Rises*, followed by *A Farewell to Arms*. I'd skip to *A Moveable Feast* and then read *The Essential Hemingway*, especially short stories such as "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," "Snows of Kilimanjaro," "Fifty Grand," and "A Small, Well-Lighted Place."

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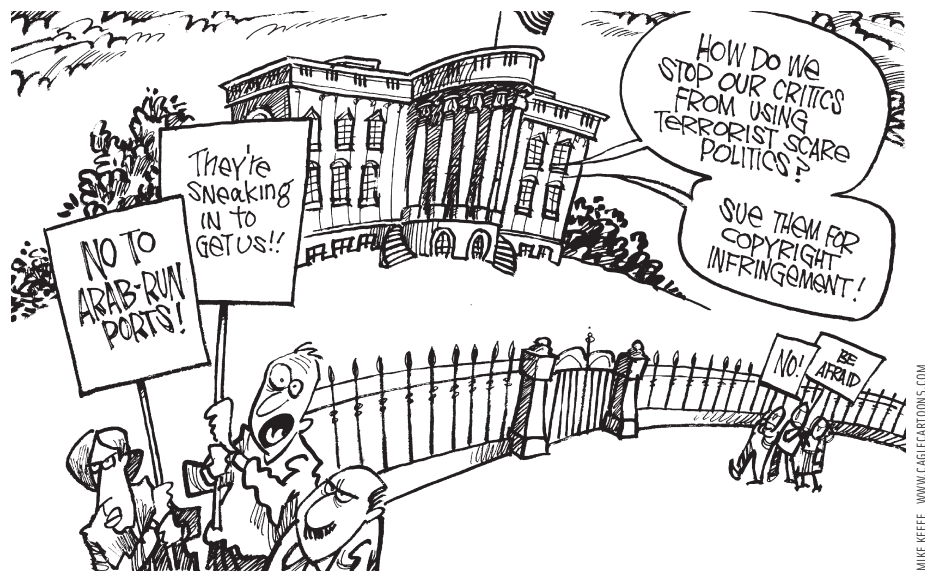
[IRAQ]

FIGHTING FOR FICTION

In the wake of what may be the first battle in a full-scale Iraqi civil war—1,300 Iraqi casualties, mostly by execution, in two days—pollster John Zogby published a stunning survey of the attitudes of American soldiers serving in the country. The surprising result was not so much that they want the U.S. to pull out within a year (72 percent said so) but what they perceive as reasons for the mission. Eighty-five percent believe they are there “to retaliate for Saddam’s role in the 9-11 attack.” This is certainly odd since the Bush administration has long stopped pretending that Saddam played such a role. Only 24 percent believed that “establishing a democracy that can be a model for the Arab world” was the reason for the U.S. presence, though this has been the administration’s public rationale since the WMD gambit turned out to be fraudulent.

It seems the soldiers have been developing independent rationales for why they fight. *TAC* contributor Gregory Cochran comments: “[T]he alternative for the average Joe is to conclude that we did it for no reason that he can understand at all: i.e., that the government is insane. So many people make up a reason because the alternative is too disturbing—more so if they think of the government as being run by their side. ... [T]he idea that a friend would have been crippled or killed for no reason that anyone would understand would be hateful.”

However understandable, the idea that so many American troops hold completely fanciful beliefs about the war they are fighting is, to say the least, disturbing in itself. One can hope that somewhere at the end of this, the United States might establish a genuine Truth Commission in which the reasons the Bush administration initiated this war



are thoroughly and honestly explored—and those responsible will be brought to justice.

[MEDIA]

BUCKLEY'S BABY REBUKES HIM

The boys at *National Review* never had a nice word for conservatives prescient enough to recognize that invading Iraq would be a fool's errand. “Unpatriotic Conservatives” was the title *NR* gave to antiwar conservatives in a cover story on the eve of the invasion. According to the piece's author, David Frum, conservatives who opposed the war “deny and excuse terror,” “espouse a potentially self-fulfilling defeatism,” and “hate their country.”

Now it seems that William F. Buckley, *National Review*'s founder, is in danger of getting on his magazine's black list. Two years ago, he wrote that if he knew at the war's outset what he later learned, he wouldn't have backed the war. Now, in the wake of savage Sunni-Sh'ite violence in Iraq, Buckley writes “One can't doubt that the American objective in Iraq has failed” and any reappraisal of U.S. policy would need to begin with “the acknowledgement of defeat.”

Three years ago, Frum called on *NR* readers to “turn their backs” on conservatives who opposed the war, and far too many followed the advice. We're curious to see whether Rich Lowry and the titans who now run the magazine will follow Frum's counsel and “turn their backs” on Bill Buckley, the man who well into his eighties still has more courage and wisdom in his little finger than the lot of Republican hacks who now set the tone at the magazine he founded.

[LIBERTIES]

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS

There isn't much novel to say about an Austrian court's sentencing of British historian David Irving to three years in prison for violating a law against denying or minimizing the Holocaust. Virtually every soul who has published an opinion on it, from Deborah Lipstadt—who six years ago won a libel suit against Irving in a London court—on, thinks it wrong to imprison a man for expressing opinions.

By jailing Irving, Austria reveals the tenuous nature of its hold to the values of the democratic West. The outraged reaction of Muslims to what they per-

ceive as blasphemous cartoons might seem temperate by comparison.

Blogger Glenn Greenwald makes the interesting point that the very unanimity of the American reaction to the sentencing—from far Left to far Right—reveals something often overlooked: there is indeed a set of values that are distinctly American to which virtually all of us implicitly subscribe. The notion that people ought to be punished by the state for expression of ideas is not something many Americans can even debate seriously. Greenwald notes that bloggers across the ideological spectrum expressed their revulsion to the Irving imprisonment in virtually the same terms, with the same language, appealing to the same ideals.

One might add that such ideals are hardly universal: there is no such outcry against the Irving sentencing in democratic Europe, or in the rest of the world where free speech is more the exception than the rule. This raises a question for the American future. While millions of people the world over subscribe to this American creed, or are susceptible to adopting it given the chance, a great majority do not. To what extent then will the American creed be put at risk by the importation of tens of millions of immigrants who don't, at present, share any commitment to such ideals? One has to wonder why the country's pro-immigration forces are so eager to conduct this experiment.

[POLITICS]

RIGHT-WING MODERATES

What do you call Republicans who are pro-life, favor smaller government, and support tax cuts? If they don't toe the Bush administration line, the answer is "moderate."

That's the conclusion one might reach from *National Journal's* 2005 vote ratings. The respected Washington magazine annually calculates how members

of Congress compare ideologically to their colleagues. This year's results produced some surprises. The composite conservative score for Congressman John Duncan (R-Tenn.) was a middling 57 percent. Walter Jones (R-N.C.) came in at 51 percent. Ron Paul (R-Texas) was considered more liberal than over 60 percent of his House colleagues.

It seems that conservative Republicans who bucked the party leadership on Iraq, government spending, and civil liberties ended up getting categorized with the GOP's Arlen Specters. Members who opposed the war or the NSA surveillance program frequently show up as foreign-policy liberals. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.)—whose composite conservative score was just 50—noted that *National Journal's* definition of conservative became "a proxy for how you voted with the administration"—which is no indicator of conservatism at all.

[MULTICULTURALISM]

OFF WITH THEIR HANDS

It's difficult to be optimistic that Europe is successfully going to integrate its large Muslim population any time soon. An IMC opinion poll in Britain, for instance, revealed last month that four in ten British Muslims don't want to live under British law but want *sharia* introduced—that is, Islamic law mandating stoning and amputation. Britain's Home Secretary could only comment blandly, "it is critically important that all faiths feel part of modern British society. Today's survey indicated we still have a long way to go."

Commenting on the very much related matter of the Danes and their Muslim population, *TAC's* Steve Sailer wrote, with incisive matter-of-factness, "Danes and Muslims don't agree on the basics of social organization and don't want to live under the same rules. That shouldn't be a severe problem. It's what separate countries are for." ■

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Are We Up to the Empire Game?

In the green room of “The McLaughlin Group,” where the topic was the Dubai ports debacle, someone morbidly observed how very much better the Brits were at this empire game.

After the events of February, it seems a fair question as to whether America has the *savoir faire* to succeed in the Middle East or whether we should not give it up and move our planes, ships, and troops out of the region and over the horizon.

The first was publication of graphic new pictures of sexual abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and of British soldiers brutalizing Iraqi teenagers. Both incidents occurred years ago, and no purpose was served other than to remind Arabs why they should hate us.

Then came the cartoon *intifada*. To see the great papers of Europe plaster these scribbles on page one suggests Europe has also become too provincial to act as a mature world power. Whatever we may think of the proscription, all knew that for an infidel to mock the prophet is a sacrilege devout Muslims would consider an insult and a provocation, and extremists would exploit the cartoons to injure our interests and friends. Yet we did it. Indeed, editors here were chastised for cowardice for not running the cartoons.

Consider one consequence. In Pakistan, radicals redirected the rage of the mobs at President “Busharraf” to bring him down. Already, the two provinces bordering on Afghanistan have elected pro-Taliban regimes and Baluchistan is in rebellion.

If Musharraf falls, Pakistan would be a greater threat to U.S. security than any “axis of evil” nation has ever posed. For it has tested nuclear weapons and has the capacity to produce a dozen a year. If

they came to power, Pakistan’s mullahs could run us out of that country and have us out of Afghanistan in short order.

If Musharraf falls, Karzai falls, and we lose the Afghan war. Was it that important to publish the idiotic cartoons?

But it is the U.S. reaction to the Hamas victory in the freest election ever held in the Arab world that seems to clinch the case that we might be more successful in the Middle East if we simply got out of the Middle East.

Recall: it was Bush and Rice who insisted the elections be held and that Israel permit Hamas to participate. But when Hamas swept the day, what was the reaction? Knee-jerk all the way. Israel declared it would cut off the \$50 million in monthly customs fees due the Palestinians. America agreed to starve out and bring down the new government. As Michael Scheuer, the former CIA analyst, writes:

That reaction probably has polished off any remaining belief in the Muslim world—assuming there was any—that the United States is sincere about building democracy in the Middle East. The reaction likewise has validated Osama bin Laden’s repeated warning that the hypocritical West supports democracy only if elections further its plan to dominate and secularize the Islamic world ...

What might America have done? Shocked the world by accepting Hamas’s victory and declaring that as long as

Hamas did not break the truce, we would continue our aid. In a stroke, Bush would have established U.S. credibility with Muslims and shifted responsibility to Hamas to maintain the peace or chop off their own aid by a renewal of suicide bombings. Is not a cold peace in the four-year *intifada* that killed 1,000 Israelis and 4,000 Palestinians, including women and children on both sides, better than a renewal of the mutual slaughter?

What would we have lost? If Hamas did what Israel expects and reignited the *intifada*, we could have cut the aid then. Bush would have shown good faith and Hamas would have exposed its own duplicity.

What will our pre-emptive cut-off in aid accomplish? Help toss 150,000 Palestinian civil servants including 50,000 police with guns out of work without pay to maintain their families. Open the door for Iran. Punish Palestinians for voting out a corrupt Fatah regime. Convince Muslims Bush and Rice are a pair of phonies who prattle about democracy but reject the results of free elections they do not like. Affirm in the Arab mind that America is the poodle of Zion.

Does Bush not realize the implications of what he has done? If U.S. policy is to support democracy and free elections across the Arab world, we are looking at a future where Islamist parties are going to be in power, sharing power, or on the verge of power in every nation, for there is a pro-Hamas constituency in every single one.

How does Bush propose to deal with the almost inevitable results of the democracy policy he is pursuing? Simply reject the election returns every time we lose.

As Casey Stengel said, “Can’t anybody here play this game?” ■

Hillary the Hawk

The Democrats' Athena only differs from Bush on the details.

By Justin Raimondo

WHEN "THE MOOSE" TALKS, Democrats listen—just like the Republicans did when he was flacking on their behalf. And the Democrat listening the closest to this Trotskyist-turned-neoconservative is Hillary Rodham Clinton, supposedly the leader of the party's far-left wing.

With his reputation for giving good quote, "the Moose," a.k.a. Marshall Wittmann, formerly John McCain's communications director and now a bigwig at the Democratic Leadership Council, is a legendary character in Washington circles. Once a member of the Trotskyist Spartacist League and an officer in the Young People's Socialist League, Wittmann, like many admirers of the Red Army's founder, moved rightward during the Reagan era and eventually wound up as the Christian Coalition's political director. From this strategic vantage point he jumped on McCain's Straight Talk Express—and then jumped ship entirely, falling into the arms of the DLC and landing, as always, on his feet.

From Leon Trotsky to Ralph Reed to Hillary Clinton is a long, torturous road to follow, yet the chameleon-like Wittmann—who styles himself a Bull Moose progressive in the tradition of his hero, Theodore Roosevelt—has navigated it expertly. Wittmann's new role as Hillary's unofficial Rasputin is perfectly suited to her current political needs. Eager to overcome her reputation as the leader of the party's left wing, Hillary is "repositioning" herself, in modern parlance, as a "centrist," i.e. a complete opportunist. She could have no better teacher than Wittmann, who from the

pulpit of his "Moose-blog," advises her to "seize the issue of Iranian nukes to draw a line in the sand." While paying lip service to multilateralism, she should "make it clear that while force is the last resort, she would never take it off the table in dealing with the madmen mullahs and the psychotic leader of Iran."

This advice was proffered on the morning of Jan. 18. By that evening, when Hillary gave her scheduled speech at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School, it had clearly been taken to heart: "I believe that we lost critical time in dealing with Iran," she averred. Accusing the White House of choosing to "downplay the threats and to outsource the negotiations," she disdained Team Bush for "standing on the sidelines."

"Let's be clear about the threat we face now," she thundered. "A nuclear Iran is a danger to Israel, to its neighbors and beyond. The regime's pro-terrorist, anti-American and anti-Israel rhetoric only underscores the urgency of the threat it poses. U.S. policy must be clear and unequivocal. We cannot and should not—must not—permit Iran to build or acquire nuclear weapons." To be sure, we need to cajole China and Russia into going along with diplomatic and economic sanctions, but "we cannot take any option off the table in sending a clear message to the current leadership of Iran—that they will not be permitted to acquire nuclear weapons."

Wittmann celebrated his apparent success in influencing the Democratic presidential frontrunner by exulting that "the Moose has a mind meld with Hillary."

Taking the opportunity to rally the shrinking but strategically placed pro-war wing of the Democratic Party around a "united front," he staked out for her a position in favor of "multi-lateral action, if possible, but unilateral action, including military options, if necessary, against the growing Iranian nuclear threat."

Hillary's newfound centrism isn't completely insincere. Her bellicose interventionism has a history: it was Hillary, you'll recall, who berated her husband for not bombing Belgrade soon enough and hard enough. As Gail Sheehy relates in *Hillary's Choice*:

Hillary expressed her views by phone to the President: 'I urged him to bomb.' The Clintons argued the issue over the next few days. [The president expressed] what-ifs: What if bombing promoted more executions? What if it took apart the NATO alliance? Hillary responded, 'You cannot let this go on at the end of a century that has seen the major holocaust of our time. What do we have NATO for if not to defend our way of life?' The next day the President declared that force was necessary.

Together with Madeleine Albright—who famously complained to Colin Powell, "What good is it having this superb military you're always talking about if we can't use it?"—Hillary constituted the Amazonian wing of the Democratic Party during the years of her husband's presidency. Her effort to outflank the Republicans on the right when it comes to the Iran issue is a logical

extension of her natural bellicosity.

Hillary is nothing if not consistent: in her floor speech to the Senate during the debate over the resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq, she declared, “the facts that have brought us to this fateful vote are not in doubt”—a statement she has never acknowledged regretting. Particularly endearing to the War Party, she framed her “aye” vote in terms of the classic neoconservative myth of Bush I’s betrayal:

The first President Bush assembled a global coalition, including many Arab states, and threw Saddam out after forty-three days of bombing and a hundred hours of ground operations. The U.S.-led coalition then withdrew, leaving the Kurds and the Shiites, who had risen against Saddam Hussein at our urging, to Saddam’s revenge.

Hillary would have occupied Iraq a decade earlier, riding into Baghdad at the head of her troops like Pallas Athena descending on the Trojans, striding boldly into what Gen. William E. Odom has described as “the greatest strategic disaster in our history.”

Hillary hails the 1998 bombing of Iraq, ordered by her husband, which killed thousands of Iraqi civilians, and recounts the official mythology promulgated by the Bush administration: “[T]he so-called presidential palaces ... in reality were huge compounds well suited to hold weapons labs, stocks, and records which Saddam Hussein was required by UN resolution to turn over. When Saddam blocked the inspection process, the inspectors left.” As we now know, there was nothing even approaching WMD in those palaces, and Iraq had been effectively disarmed at that point. In late February or early March, Scott Ritter, then a UN arms inspector, met with then-U.S. ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson. Ritter was told to provoke an incident so

the U.S. could finish bombing by the start of the Islamic New Year holiday.

Hillary, however, didn’t let any inconvenient facts get in her way. She boasted that it was under a Democratic administration that the U.S. “changed its underlying policy toward Iraq from containment to regime change” and took credit for the bright idea of putting Ahmad Chalabi, convicted embezzler and known liar, on the U.S. payroll. Her speech reads like a *Weekly Standard* editorial, reiterating each of the War Party’s talking points—the bio-weapons fantasy, the links to al-Qaeda gambit, the phantom nuclear arsenal: “This much,” she maintained, “is undisputed.”

What is undisputed these days is that the entire rationale for war was based on trumped-up evidence of Iraq’s alleged transgressions, but Hillary is unrepentant: “No, I don’t regret giving the president authority because at the time it was in the context of weapons of mass destruction, grave threats to the United States, and clearly, Saddam Hussein had been a real problem for the international community for more than a decade.”

But there was no threat to the U.S. and Hillary knows it. What’s more, her hard-core constituency knows it, and they are becoming increasingly alienated from—even actively hostile to—their putative presidential frontrunner over this issue. Their anger is stoked by evidence that Hillary has imbibed the same neocon Kool-Aid that has intoxicated the Bush administration and blinded it to the failure of its policies in Iraq.

On a trip to Iraq during which 55 people—including one American soldier—were killed by suicide bombers, Hillary was merrily chirping that the occupation was “functioning quite well” and that the surge of suicide attacks indicated that the insurgency was failing. Security was so bad that the road to the airport was impassable, and the Senate delegation had to be transported to the Green Zone

by military helicopter. They dared not venture out into the streets of Baghdad.

The disconnect between rhetoric and reality, between the antiwar views of Hillary’s left-wing base and the militant interventionism of Wittmann and the DLC crowd, finally forced her to come to grips with the contradiction—or at least to appear to do so. This occurred not in a public speech but in an e-mail sent to her supporters in which the trouble she is in is acknowledged in the first sentence: “The war in Iraq is on the minds of many of you who have written or who have called my office asking questions and expressing frustration.” Chances are, these callers were expressing frustration not only with the policies of the Bush administration but with her own complicity with Bush’s Middle Eastern agenda of seemingly endless aggression.

She falls back on the old “there are no quick and easy answers” ploy to give an aura of thoughtfulness to a dishonest and constantly shifting position on the war. While insisting that we should not “allow this to be an open-ended commitment without limits or end,” she reassures the War Party by distancing herself from John Murtha and others who want an orderly withdrawal in a relatively short time: “Nor do I believe that we can or should pull out of Iraq immediately.” She hails the elections as the signal that we can start the withdrawal process sometime “in the coming year,” but not completely: we must leave behind “a smaller contingent in safer areas with greater intelligence and quick strike capabilities”—a tripwire, in short, in the form of permanent bases.

This goes beyond anything the Bush administration would ever admit, even as it starts building those facilities—14 “enduring bases” across Iraq. The White House has been cagey about this, preferring to speak in vague generalities: we are not supposed to notice that construction was begun prior to any agreement with

the Iraqi government. With Hillary signing on to this plan for a permanent military presence in Iraq—in effect, a shadow occupation—the debate over U.S. policy in the region is settled.

If we knew then what we knew now, Hillary avers, Congress “would never have agreed” with the decision to go to war, but she forgets her previously expressed “undisputed” certainty that Saddam possessed and posed a grave threat. She complains that the administration did not act to gain international support, but it did go to the UN and made every effort to give the invasion a multinational gloss. She berates the Bush administration for failing to “level with the American people”—as if they would have gone along with it had they known that the American presence would be widely detested. She hectors the White House and Rummy for not heeding the advice of General Shinseki that as many as 200,000 troops would be necessary to occupy Iraq—as if that wouldn’t have caused a great many second thoughts in those who otherwise supported the war. She has called for more troops to be sent—even as she holds out the prospect of reducing the American presence “in the coming year.”

The president, Hillary charges, does not have a “plan” for “concluding and winning” the war. Disdaining “a rigid timetable” for withdrawal, she calls for devising “a strategy for success”—without defining what a victory would look like. When push comes to shove, her position is the same as the administration’s, albeit with minor modifications: we’ll leave when we’re good and ready and not a moment sooner.

This is not likely to assuage her core constituency—or, indeed, the rest of the country—which is increasingly opposed to continuing the war; the only red meat she throws at her base is a sharp rebuke to the Bushies for “impugning the patriotism of their critics.” Don’t mistake criticism for “softness,” she rails: Hillary,

A likely consequence of U.S. military action against Iran would be the unleashing of an unprecedented wave of suicide-bombing attacks.

In all the countries bordering the Persian Gulf there are considerable Shi’ite minorities that the Iranians have been covertly organizing to facilitate attacks in the event of war. Iran’s fifth column would be well-placed to conduct operations against pro-American Arab regimes as well as against U.S. bases. Recently, an Iranian terrorist group training suicide bombers warned that it will target American and British bases in Iraq if Iran is attacked by the U.S. or Israel. Mohammed Ali Samadi of the Martyrdom Seekers, who teaches a seminar on suicide bombing at Tehran’s Khajeh Nasir University, boasted of already having hundreds of suicide bombers and 1,000 more in training. Another professor and former Revolutionary Guard, Hasan Abbasi, has written that suicide bombers are all the “nuclear weapons” that Iran needs. After a recent seminar, 50 students, inspired by the speakers, signed up to become suicide-bomber trainees.



During Jordanian King Abdallah’s recent visit to Washington, the king urged the State Department and the National Security Council

to strengthen moderate President Mahmoud Abbas’s standing in Palestine’s post-election political environment. Both State and the NSC were receptive, as this was the policy favored by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, but Vice President Dick Cheney’s national security adviser John Hannah objected. He told the Jordanians that Abbas had been weak and ineffective and could not serve as a useful counterweight to an extremist Hamas government. Hannah, a former deputy director of an AIPAC-funded think tank, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, argued that the U.S. should not do anything to support the Palestinian Authority, letting it collapse on its own, providing a valuable object lesson to the Arabs and leaving Israel more secure than ever. The Jordanians were appalled at the profound ignorance revealed by Hannah’s comments and were left wondering what the U.S. policy really is.



There is increasing speculation that tension between the United States and Iran, ostensibly based on concerns about nuclear weapons,

might actually be fueled by Iran’s campaign to exert pressure on the U.S. dollar. Iran intends to open an oil-trading bourse on March 20, which would compete with the existing bourses in New York and London where nearly all oil is traded. The existing arrangement is denominated in dollars, which forces Europeans and nearly all other purchasers of oil to maintain large dollar reserves. The Iranian bourse will be denominated in euros and will make it possible for many central banks around the world to get rid of their dollars, possibly leading to a sharp drop in the currency’s value. Many central banks have already expressed their concern over large dollar holdings due to fears over volatility, i.e. that the currency is due for a dramatic downward adjustment because of unsustainable U.S. trade and government deficits. Venezuela, another major oil producer, has also indicated that it is interested in future oil trades being denominated in euros to reduce its dependence on the dollar economy.

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the war goddess, is no softy. Nor should we confuse her critique of the administration's means with a fundamental objection to the War Party's ends.

What does Hillary want? A smarter, smoother, better-planned interventionism, one that our allies find more amenable and yet is, in many ways, more militant than the Republican version—one that “levels with the American people” about the costs of empire and yet doesn’t dispute the alleged necessity of American hegemony. As she finds her voice as a would-be commander in chief, it isn’t one the traditional Left in this country will recognize. Hers is not the party of Eugene McCarthy but of the neoconservative Wittmann.

“If some Democrats have a modicum of imagination,” Wittmann recently wrote, “they would move to the President’s right on national security. Of course, that would require them to take on some of those on the left flank. But, if a donkey is ever to occupy the Oval Office in the foreseeable future, he or she must be perceived as being as tough or tougher than the Republicans on national security.”

The Hillary wing of the Democratic Party is taking “the Moose” up on his bet that they can outflank the Bush administration on the war front, with Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee head Congressman Rahm Emanuel taking the lead by working actively to spike antiwar candidates like Paul Hackett. When Congressman Murtha denounced the war, Emanuel snapped, “Jack Murtha went out and spoke for Jack Murtha.” Not true: he spoke for the majority of Americans, who now oppose the war and want out, and especially for the activist base of the Democratic party, which cheered while the bigwigs sought to distance themselves. What then is his party’s position on the central issue of the day? “At the right time we will have a position” on the war, he avers, and yet Emanuel has a position

decidedly in favor of continuing and even escalating the conflict.

Asked recently by Tim Russert if he would still vote for the resolution authorizing war with Iraq knowing that the WMD meme was a crock, Emanuel’s answer was an unequivocal “Yes.” His critique of the president’s war policy is, like that of many, if not most, Democrats, limited to means, not ends. “There was not a plan” for the war’s aftermath, says Emanuel, and all he and his fellows in Congress want is not a reconsideration of our policy but only “a modicum of competency in the management of this war.” Taking up the Kerry mantra, Emanuel urges the president to “level with the American people” about the long hard slog fighting to “win” in Iraq will require—as if some magic blueprint could put a wrongheaded policy right.

Russert pulled his quote-out-of-a-hat trick—“So as long as our troops [are] engaged, we should suspend the debate over how and why, focus on the mission, unite as a country, in prayer and resolve, hope for a speedy resolution of this war with a minimum of loss. God bless America”—and wondered whether this didn’t contradict what Emanuel had just said. The answer, a flat “No,” was telling: “In fact, Tim, what I actually believe it’s consistent in this perspective. ... I think the president came, as you know, for resolution to Congress. He got that. Second, he asked multiple times for the resources to fight that war. He has got that. What we ask in return is a plan.”

Yet what sort of plan could possibly have prevented the dissolution of the Iraqi state and the onset of civil war? What would have blocked the Iranians from extending their influence into the Shi’ite south of the country and taking over the leadership of the central government in Baghdad? It’s true that General Shinseki warned that we would need 200,000 soldiers to manage the occupation. Without radically reducing our

commitments elsewhere, however, such a force is largely imaginary—unless the Democratic plan involves reintroducing the draft. Nothing quite so forthright has come from Emanuel’s direction—only vague hopes that somehow the Europeans will come to our rescue.

If the Democratic establishment’s stance on the war is at odds with the party’s antiwar activist base, then their outright warmongering on the Iranian issue puts the two factions on a collision course. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi—who effectively quashed fellow California Democrat Lynn Woolsey’s resolution calling for a withdrawal timetable—has followed the Hillary-Emanuel-DLC party line, while managing somehow to assuage her constituents with plenty of pork and partisan rhetoric. When it comes to Iran, however, she is just as belligerent as the next neocon: Pelosi cosponsored legislation imposing draconian economic sanctions on Iran and stops just short of calling another war.

If Hillary maintains her lead in the Democratic presidential sweepstakes—and with over \$21 million in the bank, she’s way ahead of any potential rivals—and the party establishment effectively strangles insurgent antiwar activism at the grassroots level, an increasingly “isolationist” electorate will be faced with a choice between two interventionist candidates, giving credence to what Garet Garrett, that lion of the Old Right, bitterly observed in 1951:

Between government in the republican meaning, that is, Constitutional, representative, limited government, on the one hand, and Empire on the other hand, there is mortal enmity. Either one must forbid the other or one will destroy the other. That we know. Yet never has the choice been put to a vote of the people. ■

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Mission Improbable

Even the neocons, who long for war with Iran, concede it isn't feasible.

By Scott McConnell

THOSE SEEKING INDICATIONS that George W. Bush's "global war on terror" will next target Iran have had much to point to. With little prompting beyond the newly elected Iranian president Ahmadinejad's inflammatory statements about wiping Israel off the map, a robust 57 percent of Americans told pollsters that if diplomacy failed, they would back military action against Iran's nuclear program. (Veteran Democratic pollster Pat Caddell remarked that he had never seen support for military action spike so quickly without a presidential speech or comparable high-level public mobilization.)

If the White House has been relatively circumspect, the War Party punditocracy has been thumping. Fox News host Sean Hannity has been calling the Iranian president whose name few Americans know "the new Hitler of our time"—Saddam no longer being suitable for the role. Presidential hopefuls of both parties are auditioning as tough guys: John McCain asserts that a nuclear-armed Iran is "unacceptable" while Hillary Clinton knocks the Bush administration for "outsourcing" its Iran policy to diplomacy-addicted Europeans. Other parallels to the Iraq run-up abound: the publication of books highlighting lurid accusations against Iran (including the absurd charge that Iran actually plotted 9/11 with Osama bin Laden) and the emergence of Iranian ethnic separatist or exile groups agitating inside the Beltway for American military action. Of course, there are bellicose editorials from *The Weekly Standard* and *Wall Street Journal*.

But the differences are worth noting. The Iraq War was an intellectuals' project, and the neoconservatives pushed it vigorously. Republican resistance was minimal. On Iran today, there isn't the same lockstep momentum. For instance, in early February, the American Enterprise Institute held an event devoted to the Iranian nuclear issue—a packed room, a charismatic right-wing senator (Kansas Sam Brownback) as keynote speaker, panelists who had been championing a hard line against Tehran for years. Representatives of various Iranian exile groups circled the room, while AEI's resident blonde war goddess, Danielle Pletka, presided. And yet no one on the podium could bring himself to say that an American military solution had much chance of successfully resolving the problem.

Brownback, introduced by Pletka as "an activist" and a "true believer," spoke of the steady erosion of human rights in Iran, ticking through the data points about arrests and the regime's rhetorical belligerence. But regime change could not be a military exercise. Brownback called instead for the U.S. to flood the Persian landscape with videos and satellite broadcasts—in effect, a Cold War-type political strategy. As models for change he mentioned Poland's Solidarity and the campaigns of the recently deceased Coretta Scott King. Asked to comment on John McCain's call for military action as the ultimate resort, the senator said, "Change happens from within on Iran. ... I don't see a viable military option."

It's not only Brownback. Robert Kagan, the hawkish neoconservative author and

Washington Post columnist who has the distinction of co-authoring dozens of articles and editorials with *The Weekly Standard's* Bill Kristol, including the original pieces calling for war against Iraq, writes that the likely costs of a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities "outweigh the benefits."

That's almost certainly true. While air strikes against Iran would have no assurance of eliminating that country's hardened and dispersed nuclear program, Iran would have many retaliatory cards to play through Shi'ite militias or terrorist groups in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Israel, and the Strait of Hormuz. Unless the U.S. is ready to accept, as an outcome of inconclusive air strikes, oil at \$200 a barrel, many more body bags coming home from Iraq, and Pakistan's nuclear arsenal falling into the hands of God knows who, it must recognize the military option is a very poor one.

The neoconservative fallback position, now touted by Condoleezza Rice, is democratic "regime change"—ideological and political subversion of the mullahs' government. But it isn't very promising either. While large numbers (though not necessarily a majority) of Iranians yearn for the end of the mullahcracy, Radio Free Europe-type efforts run smack up against the dominant fact of Iran's political culture: a distaste for foreign meddling that might seem paranoid were it not for Iran's actual history. Few Americans have bad memories of the Shah's dictatorship, but Iranians do: the CIA overthrow of Mossadegh, a flawed but popular elected

liberal nationalist, in 1953 and his replacement by the Shah is a seminal event in Iranian consciousness. The throngs that ousted the dictator 25 years later were likely the largest revolutionary crowds in the history of the world. In *The Persian Puzzle*, Kenneth Pollack describes the Shah's regime, supported by a murderous secret police, as a personality cult on the level of Mao's China or North Korea. Iranians may yearn for greater freedom and more ties to the West, but revolutionary movements tainted by an American connection are likely to fail. For all the neocon talk of "the radios" and beaming in freedom messages by satellite, Iran is quite unlike Eastern Europe under Communist domination because the nationalist and patriot card can be effectively played against American initiatives.

If military options are unpalatable and regime change through broadcasts and covert subventions to labor unions won't work, we are inevitably back to how "unacceptable" an Iranian nuclear program really is. In Washington, there

Bolton acknowledges that "for the United States the threat posed by Iran is not direct" but that the Iranians could "strike at our friends and allies in the region." State Department officials, with characteristic precision, emphasize this: "A nuclear armed Iran would represent a direct threat to U.S. forces and allies in the region," said Robert G. Joseph, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security. The threat is not to New York or Cleveland, but to U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf or, given Ahmadinejad's rhetoric, to Tel Aviv. And obviously any Iranian nuclear action against American forces would bring forth a rapid and horrific retaliation.

But while the prospect of an Iranian threat to Israel may be new, the subject of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East is not. And though one wouldn't guess it by their present rhetoric, it is a topic to which American neoconservatives, among others, have given serious thought. More than 30 years ago, Robert W. Tucker—then becoming notorious for

attractive option neither for Israel nor the U.S. The solution was for Israel to adopt, rather formally, a nuclear deterrent so that its strategic relationship with the Arabs could more resemble the nuclear standoff between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. "Far from proving destabilizing," Tucker wrote, "a nuclear balance between Israel and the major Arab states would have a stabilizing effect. On the Arab side, there would no longer be reason to fear that Israel might be tempted to use its nuclear deterrent for expansionist purposes. On the Israeli side the present preoccupation with secure borders could markedly diminish ... not only would the justification of holding on to the territorial buffers be stripped away but also the *security* arguments for opposing the creation of a Palestinian state (the security arguments being the only ones that deserve a hearing)."

These words were written, of course, before Israel settled a quarter million people on the territory of a prospective Palestinian state, rendering the matter far more difficult. But a nuclear balance between Israel and the Arab states is logically no more difficult to contemplate than a nuclear balance between Tel Aviv and Tehran, which has no historic or territorial grievances against Israel.

Twenty-four years later, in "Thinking the Unthinkable about the Middle East," *Commentary's* Gabriel Schoenfeld addressed Tucker's argument. A nuclear-armed Iran, Schoenfeld claimed, would compel Israeli nuclear forces to be on a constant hair-trigger status, ready to launch on the mere warning of an Iranian attack because Israel was too small to absorb a first strike and consider its options. But this argument underestimates Israel's present strategic force, which includes submarines and an air force. Israel has the kind of "survivable" nuclear force that makes a stable regime of deterrence with its enemies possible.

It is natural that Israelis would feel

WILLIAM ODOM ASSERTS WE SHOULD OFFER THE IRANIANS THE BOMB IF THEY WANT IT, NOTING THAT ONLY UNDER THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION HAS NONPROLIFERATION BEEN USED TO FOSTER REGIONAL DESTABILIZATION.

are a surprising number of analysts, even Bush supporters, who consider an Iranian bomb inevitable at some point—off the record that is. And for some it's not off the record: William Odom, former head of the National Security Agency, asserts we should offer the Iranians the bomb if they want it, noting that only under the Bush administration has nonproliferation been used to foster regional destabilization.

The Odom assertion underscores a salient point: an Iranian bomb or two does not constitute a great danger to the United States. Even superhawk John

his brazen essays about seizing the oil fields in the Persian Gulf—addressed the topic in a lengthy article in *Commentary*. The main focus of "Israel and the United States: From Dependence to Nuclear Weapons" was Israeli dependence on the U.S.—blatantly exposed by Washington's arms airlift during the Yom Kippur War. Less than two years later, South Vietnam, the ultimate American dependency, fell to the Communists, raising the question of how much a dependent ally could count on Washington in the crunch. Tucker's conclusion in 1975: Israeli dependence on the United States for its survival is an

more comfortable as the only state in the Mideast with a nuclear arsenal, and Israeli spokesmen have honed the melodramatic soundbite that an Iranian bomb would constitute “an existential threat” to the Jewish state. Well, yes, it would. Existential threats are, it is regrettable to say, what the nuclear age is all about. For 40 years, the United States faced an existential threat from the Soviet Union, and the Soviet regime in turn faced an existential threat from the United States. Either side could end the meaningful national life of the other—but only at the cost of losing its own. In lamenting the possible emergence of an “existential threat” from Iran, Israel is not complaining about anything that other countries have not had to live with for the past two generations.

In January, *Jane's Intelligence Review* reported that some Israeli strategists are wondering whether Israel's current strategic doctrine, which mandates that Tel Aviv maintain absolute superiority over any potential rival, is really worth the trouble it causes. According to *Jane's*, some Israeli defense intellectuals are arguing that the requirement “can create enemies where previously they did not exist.” The alternative is for Israel to adopt a strategy of deterrence, the same doctrine that saw the United States through the Cold War, the doctrine Robert Tucker prescribed for the Mideast 30 years ago.

Much will be revealed in the coming months. *The Weekly Standard* has now labeled the Iran nuclear crisis the “defining test of Bush's war presidency.” (The previous test, laid down by Bill Kristol in September 2001, was Iraq. Bush followed *The Standard's* advice and launched an invasion, thus “passing” with flying colors.) But even in neoconland, *The Standard's* view that the Iran problem has a military solution is not widely accepted. Americans who want to get through the Bush presidency without igniting a world war must hope that it never is. ■

Six Ports and a Storm

The Dubai debacle shows Americans looking inward.

By Leon Hadar

IT'S NOT EVERY NEWS CYCLE that the columnists for the anti-interventionist Antiwar.com and for the internationalist op-ed page of the *New York Times* find themselves echoing the same line-of-the-day spun by the media masters of George W. Bush's White House. Those lawmakers who have criticized the Bush administration's decision to allow a company owned by the government of Dubai—which is part of the United Arab Emirates—to purchase a British company, Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation—which now has the contract to operate six major U.S. ports—were “Kicking Arabs in Their Teeth,” screamed the headline of a column by the *Times'* in-house neoconservative David Brooks, a staunch supporter of the war in Iraq. Meanwhile, Justin Raimondo, the long-time libertarian editor of Antiwar.com and a persistent opponent of the military adventure in Mesopotamia, accused those opposed to the deal with the Arab-owned company, Dubai Ports World, of “hating Arabs.”

Is “Dubai a hotbed of radical Islamist agitation?” asked Raimondo, who sounding like the “freedom is on the march in the Middle East” neocons noted that “Dubai is the one city in the Middle East that is the most like America in that it is a symbol—the symbol—of the Arab world's entry into modernity.” Brooks, transforming himself into a born-again Arabist, denied that the

Arab city of Dubai was “a bastion of Taliban radicalism,” describing it as “a modernizing, globalizing place.”

It would be an exaggeration to describe this brief political romance between libertarians and neocons as a sign of a major realignment in American politics. That Sen. Hillary Clinton—who would probably go ballistic if the government targeted Arab-Americans for security checks at airports (“racial profiling”)—would rally against permitting an Arab-owned company to run American port terminals because it's, well, Arab (“national profiling”?) smacks of pure political opportunism. Indeed, there is little doubt that the Democrats are exploiting the controversy to “get to the right of George Bush,” as suggested by Charles Krauthammer, who in the name of national security would permit the U.S. government to listen your phone conversations and torture suspected terrorists but who backs the Dubai deal that could potentially endanger U.S. security by making it easier for terrorists from the Middle East to infiltrate American ports.

What is more intriguing has been the anti-Bush rebellion over the port issue by Republicans on Capitol Hill and around the country. “Dear Mr. President: In regards to selling American ports to the United Arab Emirates, not just NO but HELL NO!” Rep. Sue Myrick, a Republican from North Carolina, wrote

to Bush in a one-sentence letter, reflecting the angry mood among her conservative Republican district. The same sentiment was expressed on conservative radio talk shows whose hosts talked about organizing demonstrations outside the White House. Indeed, Gov. Mike Huckabee, an Arkansas Republican, told the *New York Times* that the deal “puts a lot of elected officials in an impossible situation,” suggesting that “the visceral reaction they got from their constituents left them no choice in opposing it.” Even some of the pro-Bush hosts on Fox News, including John Gibson, expressed opposition to the deal (although Bill O'Reilly backed it).

It's ironic that President Bush and his aides, with Raimondo and Brooks by their side, were bashing as “hysterical,” “anti-Arab,” and “racist” the “visceral reaction” to the Dubai deal by Republi-

can conservatives who had backed his decision to oust Iraq's Saddam Hussein and voted for Bush in the two recent presidential races. As author William Greider pointed out in *The Nation*, “Hysteria launched Bush's invasion of Iraq. Hysteria has been used to realign US foreign policy for permanent imperial war-making, whenever and wherever we find something frightening afoot in the world. Hysteria will justify the ‘long war’ now fondly embraced by Field Marshal Rumsfeld. It has also slaughtered a number of Democrats who were not sufficiently hysterical. It saved George Bush's butt in 2004.” It was Bush who picked at the American people's “emotional wounds after 9/11 and encouraged them to imagine endless versions of even-larger danger,” Greider wrote. “What if someone shipped a nuke into

New York Harbor? Or poured anthrax in the drinking water? OK, a lot of Americans got scared, even people who ought to know better.” Or to put it differently, when you unleash the forces of nationalism, don't be surprised if you get overwhelmed by them.

Indeed, it was a wounded post-9/11 sense of American nationalism spiced with strong anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiments and energized by fears of Saddam's alleged weapons of mass destruction, not any eagerness to spread freedom in the Middle East, that explained why so many Republicans and conservatives from the South and the Midwest, who probably couldn't even find Iraq on the map and certainly weren't interested in establishing a democracy there, rallied behind Bush during the invasion of Iraq. They were hoping that we would capture and kill

policy analyst Francis Fukuyama expressed his concern that the “Jacksonian” nationalists, who have been Bush's most loyal political troops, are deserting him against the backdrop of the mess in Iraq:

Those whom Walter Russell Mead labels Jacksonian conservatives—red-state Americans whose sons and daughters are fighting and dying in the Middle East—supported the Iraq war because they believed that their children were fighting to defend the United States against nuclear terrorism, not to promote democracy. They don't want to abandon the president in the middle of a vicious war, but down the road the perceived failure of the Iraq intervention may push them to favor a more isolationist foreign policy, which is a more natural political position for them. A recent Pew poll indicates a swing in public opinion toward isolationism; the percentage of Americans saying that the United States ‘should mind its own business’ has never been higher since the end of the Vietnam War.

The same Pew poll also points to the growing opposition among Americans to free trade and open immigration, suggesting that the war in Iraq is also triggering resistance among the Jacksonians against corporate-led globalization. It's not surprising therefore that the agenda of libertarians who wanted to spread peace through global commerce is now being undermined by the policies of the Wilsonians who had hoped to promote democracy through war—as they both face the wrath of angry Jacksonians. ■

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AMERICANS ARE NOW ANGRY THAT AMERICAN TROOPS ARE KILLED IN IRAQ TO FULFILL WILSONIAN FANTASIES WHILE BUSINESS INTERESTS BRING IN TERRORISTS.

can conservatives who had backed his decision to oust Iraq's Saddam Hussein and voted for Bush in the two recent presidential races. As author William Greider pointed out in *The Nation*, “Hysteria launched Bush's invasion of Iraq. Hysteria has been used to realign US foreign policy for permanent imperial war-making, whenever and wherever we find something frightening afoot in the world. Hysteria will justify the ‘long war’ now fondly embraced by Field Marshal Rumsfeld. It has also slaughtered a number of Democrats who were not sufficiently hysterical. It saved George Bush's butt in 2004.” It was Bush who picked at the American people's “emotional wounds after 9/11 and encouraged them to imagine endless versions of even-larger danger,” Greider wrote. “What if someone shipped a nuke into

those who were tied to the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington—which according to White House propaganda included Saddam.

After getting rid of the SOB's, these Americans wanted to make sure that Americans troops returned home and that similar SOB's wouldn't infiltrate American borders (and ports) again. Instead, after finding out that Saddam had no WMD and no ties to al-Qaeda, these same Americans are now angry that American troops are killed in Iraq to fulfill Wilsonian fantasies of making the Middle East safe for democracy while—this is their perception—business interests are allowing Arabs to control our ports and help bring in terrorists.

Interestingly enough, in his latest “don't shoot, I'm not a neocon” manifesto in the *New York Times*, foreign-

Downhill Olympics

The vulgarized Winter Games feature pranks and petulance, not grit and beauty.

By Diana Moon

ON FEB. 19, 1968, a 19-year-old American sylph in a blue dress sewn by her mother won a gold medal at the Winter Olympics in Grenoble, France. It was the first Olympics broadcast in color, and the performance was televised live. America fell in love. Given that only seven years had passed since the entire U.S. figure skating team had been wiped out in a plane crash en route to the Prague World Figure Skating Championships, and that Peggy Fleming was the only American gold-medal winner at Grenoble, the excitement was justified. Figure skating had its biggest star since Sonja Henie. Fleming became a genuine celebrity, with five primetime specials.

But her triumph wasn't the main event at Grenoble. The bona fide star was France's Jean-Claude Killy, who performed the spectacular feat of winning alpine skiing's triple crown, taking golds in downhill, slalom, and giant slalom. In 1968, gracious acknowledgment of the "wide world of sports" didn't preclude Americans from appreciating greatness in competitions that, for the most part, were foreign to them. Killy dazzled Americans as much as he did the rest of the world and became a household name for a while. The king and queen of Grenoble graced covers of *Life* magazine, when making the cover of *Life* meant you were truly famous.

Gone with the wind. The aura from the 2006 Winter Olympics is not the ecumenism and glamour of Grenoble, but crudeness, vulgar nativism, and callowness. This was most apparent in the

focus on snowboarding, a group of tricks invented by American teenagers in the 1960s and popularized by ESPN's X Games. As "snowboard cross" champion Seth Westcott gloated, "I'm only seeing it from the U.S. side but seeing the amount of marketing that went into this Olympics based around snowboarding, I think snowboarding is really becoming the heart and soul of the Olympic Games."

Who can disagree? Four out of six snowboarding events were held the first week, dominating a huge chunk of coverage. Americans cleaned up, winning gold and silver in the men's halfpipe, gold and silver in women's halfpipe, gold in the men's snowboard cross, and silver in the women's snowboard cross, where American Lindsey Jacobellis screwed up a sure shot at gold with a dumb stunt at the last minute. Whatever. It was kewl.

The Stoner Olympics have arrived. The games' most identifiable personality has been "the flying tomato" Shaun White, the amiable skateboard phenom turned snowboarder, who took the gold in the iPod half-pipe. (The snowboarders' uniforms were actually outfitted with speakers built into the hoods and a control panel on the sleeve.) When dudette Hannah Teter, gold medalist in the women's halfpipe, appeared on David Letterman's show, hair poking out from under a grungy knit cap, leg flung over the arm of the chair, all Letterman could say was, "I'm getting older by the minute."

At some point, the zeitgeist decreed that skiing, a sport in which athletes attain speeds up to 85 mph and expert practitioners have died, is dull and stodgy, and snowboarding, a sport of judged tricks, is not. Killy is about as with-it as go-go boots—as with-it as the phrase with-it.

That said, one sport eclipsing another didn't have to bring on the collapse of will I saw on NBC's coverage. What happened? As with a heart attack, the reasons are multifactorial, but I would pick three: anti-elitism, jingoism, and commercialism.

The Winter Olympics were always second banana to the summer games, but they once meant something. They were exotic and consisted of sports with which most Americans had no everyday experience. These were the fantasy Olympics, and that was nowhere more apparent than in the two marquee events, alpine skiing and figure skating. The appeal of alpine skiing was based on French glamour and elegance (Jean-Claude Killy), sexy Italian sizzle (Alberto Tomba), and dazzling Nordic competence (Ingemar Stenmark, Toni Sailer). These European sportsmen came from the same cultural DNA as Jean-Paul Belmondo, James Bond, and Ingmar Bergman. Watching them combined the excitement of watching a great sporting event with going to an art-house cinema. And they won.

Displays of nationalism began innocently enough with the rapturous win of the U.S. hockey team in 1980 and metastasized into ugly soccer-style hooligan-

ism in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. The USA! USA! fist-pumping jingoism of the 1984 Olympics was so extreme it bothered even the conservative columnist Dick Young, who bemoaned the obsession with anything American, including “small-bores rifle competition,” to the exclusion of anything non-American. Only American champions had names, the rest were relegated to Palookaville. The only exception was Katarina Witt, a gorgeous figure skater who dueled an American for the championship and posed for *Playboy*.

On NBC’s “Olympic Zone,” Jane Hansen told us that speedskating Yanks Shani Davis and Chad Hedrick were upstaged by an Italian “national hero” but didn’t bother to tell us his name (Enrico Fabris). Jim Lehrer announced

After paying \$613 million for television rights, executives were taking no chances, deciding to perform a gene transplant from the wildly popular ESPN Winter X Games and focus on a surging sport dominated by Americans. When snowboarding first crashed onto the scene in the 1960s, the culture clash between the new sport and skiing was raw. Over the years, as snowboarding underwent a natural process of commercialization and co-optation, it appeared that the culture war was over. Now it seems that there was no truce but annihilation.

As a two cheers for capitalism type, I wouldn’t argue with this decision, except for one problem: it hasn’t worked. Although Dick Ebersol claims that NBC will make a profit on the Olympics, rat-

Does the vulgarity of the television coverage matter? After all, depending on TV for live sporting events in the internet age is ludicrous. By the time Americans see the results, the competition is over and what they are watching is a tape-delayed sham with reporters pretending to break news that they know has already been broken. True, Fleming’s live performance wasn’t much of a surprise. She had racked up so many points that only a bad spill would have taken the gold away. But the performance was live. The effect was so exhilarating that people remember it as being a flawless performance even though it wasn’t. What’s left for primetime coverage is trumped-up soap opera.

Times change, youth must be served, and snowboarding doesn’t herald the end of Western civilization. I confess that I admire the pizzazz, and bodacious fearlessness of those little snowboarding devils and she-devils. Try doing a 50/50 grind in a burqa. Having to wear a burqa would be so whack.

The Winter Olympics used to be a once-in-four-years fantasy trip to a better place, a chance to think of yourself as something out of your reality: a daredevil downhill racer, an ice princess, or Jean-Claude Killy’s girlfriend. If this Olympics is any indication, total gnarliosity has insinuated itself like kudzu and killed all native life forms. The glamour is gone.

Can we all get along? My heart says yes, my head says no. You can’t have it all, pop culturally speaking. You can have an Olympics based on sophistication, grit, and beauty, or you can have one based on childish pranks and petulance. NBC could have ignored the nonsense and focused on real sports and real personalities, but they chose to focus on kid stuff. Next time, I think I’ll pass. ■

Diana Moon writes from New York.

MEN’S ALPINE SKIING WAS BILLED AS **BODE MILLER VS. A BUNCH OF FACELESS EUROPEANS**. WHEN MILLER **BUNGLED** TO A SERIES OF HAPLESS LOSSES, **COVERAGE OF ALPINE SKIING WENT DOWN THE TUBES**.

that Americans Belbin and Agosto had won the silver medal for ice-dancing, while “a Russian couple” had won the gold. And men’s alpine skiing was billed as Bode Miller vs. A Bunch of Faceless Europeans. When Miller bungled to a series of hapless losses, coverage of alpine skiing went down the tubes. Miller’s entire persona represented the triumph of snowboarding values in the world of alpine skiing.

Finally, the networks are run by people who have a dollar sign where the Y chromosome normally is. Ladies’ figure skating is always a winner. The 1994 final was the second-highest-rated sporting event ever, but the 1998 Nagano Olympics drew the lowest ratings in 30 years. Ratings rebounded with the Salt Lake City games, a domestic Olympics that benefited from post-9/11 patriotism.

ings were poor, and critics were scathing in their denunciation of the coverage. NBC tried one gimmick after another to fill the vacuum, even having Bob Costas interview Jerome Bettis on Saturday night. (He looked relieved to be speaking to an athlete he could recognize.) A schoolboy spat between Shani Davis—the first African-American athlete to win an individual Winter Games gold medal, as we were dutifully and tiresomely lectured—and Chad Hedrick was inflated into a national event. Strange-boy skater Apolo Anton Ohno was on, it seemed, every night, perhaps because some executive thought his Maynard G. Krebs facial hair would appeal to youth. None of it worked until the women figure skaters took to the ice, and NBC finally beat the competition—after “American Idol” was over.

Cheney of Command

Ask the veep which laws bind the White House.

By James Bovard

THE BIGGEST SURPRISE from the shooting of Harry Worthington was Dick Cheney's announcement that he is entitled to declassify national security secrets. Such declassifications raise the question of whether the president and vice president possess unlimited discretion to manipulate the information Americans receive. And if Cheney does not actually possess the new prerogative he claims, he could risk impeachment if he invokes this power as a shield in the trial of his former chief of staff.

Near the end of the softball interview on the Worthington shooting, Brit Hume asked Cheney: "Is it your view that a vice president has the authority to declassify information?"

CHENEY: There is an executive order to that effect.

Q: There is?

CHENEY: Yes.

Q: Have you done it?

CHENEY: Well, I've certainly advocated declassification and participated in declassification decisions. The executive order—

Q: You ever done it unilaterally?

CHENEY: I don't want to get into that. There is an executive order that specifies who has classification authority, and obviously focuses first and foremost on the President, but also includes the Vice President.

Hume had asked Cheney about the upcoming trial of Scooter Libby. Cheney replied, "It's nothing I can talk about. ... I may well be called as a witness at some

point in the case. And it's, therefore, inappropriate for me to comment ..."

Cheney may have uncorked this surprise in response to the revelation in court papers the week before that Libby had "testified that he was authorized to disclose information about the NIE [National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq] to the press by his superiors." This NIE contained the soul of the allegations about Iraqi WMD that the Bush team invoked to justify attacking Saddam. At the time Libby leaked the information to journalists, the report had not been declassified. There is no evidence that Libby was taking orders from the secretary of agriculture or even the postmaster general, so "superiors" means Dick Cheney. (Cheney has never been accused of a laissez-faire management style.)

Cheney claims he is authorized to disclose secrets because of Executive Order 13292, issued by Bush just after the invasion of Iraq. This order amends an executive order issued by President Clinton in 1995 governing national-security information. Bush's executive order greatly increased the prerogative of the vice president to lock away information from public view. It was largely ignored at the time because most of the American media were embedded, at home and abroad, in the glorious race to Baghdad.

But, though Bush did greatly expand Cheney's prerogative to classify information, there was nothing in the executive order that specified that the vice president can declassify secrets on his whim. As Steve Clemons of the New America Foundation observed, "the

rules and processes for *classifying* national security information are completely different than *declassifying* information." The agency that classifies information presumptively has jurisdiction over declassifications. Eugene Fidell, a Washington lawyer, told NPR, "You have to ask who the original classification authority is. And under the executive order that Mr. Bush issued, the declassification authority is either the official who originally classified or the successor in office of that official or a supervisory official of either one."

Perhaps the vice president assumes that the power to classify automatically includes the power to declassify—the same way that the president's right to start a war naturally includes the right to make peace. But this interpretation scorns established laws and procedures. Attorney Mark Levey observed, "Cheney would have first had to request that George Tenet authorize Agency declassification. There is no record that such permission was ever sought or obtained." Levey concluded that Cheney violated the law by authorizing the disclosure of confidential information: "There is no murky presidential delegation of powers, as has been suggested by some, that might change that fact."

Also, there is a specific federal law—enacted at the behest of George H.W. Bush—that makes it a crime to disclose the name of an undercover CIA agent. Because an executive order cannot overturn a law of the land, Order 13292 can provide no safe harbor for either Cheney or Libby.

The “my wish is the law’s command” attitude towards disclosure and secrecy has permeated the Bush administration. From shortly after 9/11, the Bush team sought to drop an Iron Curtain around the federal government. Attorney General John Ashcroft issued a ruling severely weakening the Freedom of Information Act in October 2001. The following month, Bush issued an executive order that makes it far more difficult for the public to gain access to presidential papers. The administration took an extreme position in the confidentiality of Cheney’s Energy Task Force, and the Supreme Court swallowed the argument. Jay Leno lampooned the Bush administration’s view of separation of powers: “That means that people who don’t have any power shouldn’t be allowed to find out what the people who do have power are doing.”

Yet when it serves Bush’s interests, information is speedily disclosed. While Bush battled for almost two years to prevent Congress or the 9/11 Commission from seeing the President’s Daily Brief from Aug. 6, 2001—warning that bin Laden was planning to attack the United States—hand-picked Bush biographer Bob Woodward was shown copies of other President’s Daily Briefs.

Bush administration disclosures of sensitive information are often handed on a silver platter to pliant journalists the same way that Cheney chose Fox News for his post-shooting interview. *Newsweek*’s Richard Wolffe explained the Bush White House *modus operandi*: “They declassify when they feel like it. I’ve been with senior administration officials who have just decided to declassify something in front of me because it’s bolstering their argument.” *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd, who labeled Cheney “the Great Declassifier,” noted, “the entire Iraq war was paved by its leaks. Cheney & Co. were so busy trying to prove a mushroom cloud was

emanating from Saddam’s direction, they could not leak their cherry-picked stories fast enough.”

Bush administration officials sometimes deceive people when selectively disclosing information. Judith Miller agreed to portray Scooter Libby as a “former congressional staffer” instead of saying that he was in the White House or working for the Bush administration. As the *Boston Globe* noted, “Declassifying information for the purpose of sharing it with trusted journalists who then attribute it to anonymous sources taints the process and provides yet more proof that the disclosure was politically motivated.”

From his endless false claims about a meeting in Prague between 9/11 hijacker Mohamed Atta and Iraqi government officials to his brazen and false denial that he had ever met John Edwards before their vice-presidential debate to his assertions that all those locked up at Guantanamo are “bad people” (despite U.S. government findings to the contrary), Cheney has never let facts stand in the way of political aggrandizement. Extreme secrecy gives him a right to trample the truth and then hide the corpse.

The more information the government withholds, the easier it becomes to manipulate public opinion with whatever “facts” government does release. The government tilts the playing field in favor of ignorance and then, with well-timed revelations, stampedes the media in the direction it wants them to go.

If Cheney’s interpretation of the law is correct, then there is no limit to the amount of mischief he could inflict. Here we have the most powerful vice president in American history and someone full of venom for critics and anyone who does not support his warmongering. The federal government is vacuuming up far more personal information on Americans than ever before. If Cheney is entitled to leak the identity of an under-

cover CIA agent, there is no reason he could not leak information about other critics of his policy—regardless of whether such leaks violate privacy laws or other prohibitions.

The views on secrecy and selective leaking are keystones to the Bush-Cheney view of presidents’ right to absolute power. Cheney’s new chief of staff, David Addington, champions the doctrine that the president is above the law. Rep. Jane Harman, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, has heard Addington’s comments on presidential power and torture during classified briefings; Harman told the *Washington Post* that Addington “believes that in time of war, there is total authority for the president to waive any rules to carry out his objectives.” Addington was heavily involved in writing the 2002 memo on torture that revised the American political catechism by proclaiming, “criminal statutes are not read as infringing on the president’s ultimate authority.” Addington has been very aggressive against State Department and Pentagon officials who opposed torture. He may also be heavily involved in thwarting congressional oversight or investigations of the National Security Agency wiretaps that Bush ordered.

Perhaps it is time for someone to ask Cheney what, if any, laws still apply to the vice president. Cheney made it clear in his speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference that the Bush administration aims to use its warrantless wiretapping as a bragging point in this year’s congressional campaigns. Does the rule of law, 2006, now mean that whatever rules the president or vice president proclaim are the law of the land? ■

James Bovard is author of the just published Attention Deficit Democracy and eight other books.

Race War Behind Bars

In Los Angeles prisons, Mexican gangs target black inmates.

By Roger D. McGrath

THE RACIAL VIOLENCE that has plagued Los Angeles County, particularly South Central Los Angeles and the adjacent city of Compton, has erupted in the county jails. In the lockups, Mexicans and other Latinos outnumber blacks by two or more to one and have used their advantage to control life on the inside. Any black transgression is met with retaliation whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Such occurred on Saturday afternoon, Feb. 4, at one of the several jail facilities at the Pitchess Detention Center near Castaic, when Latino inmates launched an attack—apparently to avenge the stabbing of a Mexican by blacks two days earlier at the Men's Central Jail in downtown Los Angeles—by throwing metal bed frames, mattresses, and other objects from the upper level of a jail dormitory onto blacks below. The fighting soon became hand-to-hand, occasionally prison-crafted weapon-to-weapon. The brawling continued for four hours and involved more than 2,000 inmates. Some 200 were seriously injured. One was killed. Although the sheriff's department did not release information on the racial identity of those injured, word has it that blacks got much the worst of it. The dead inmate was Wayne Tiznor, a 45-year-old black man who had previously served time for rape and was back in the joint for violating parole by not registering with local police as a sex offender.

The fighting ended only after the jail's regular guards were reinforced by more

than 200 deputies rushed in from around the county to the detention center, 40 miles north of Los Angeles. The deputies fired tear-gas canisters, flash-bang grenades, and rubber bullets into the mass of brawling inmates.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca proffered several reasons for the violence in the county's jails but revealed the obvious when he ordered the immediate segregation of brown and black prisoners who together comprise 90 percent of the inmate population. Thus far, whites have stayed out of the brown-on-black attacks.

Racial segregation—at least when conditions made it practical—had been the policy of county jails in Los Angeles since fights between Latinos and blacks became ever more frequent during the 1990s. In February 2005, however, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, in a case brought, ironically, by a black inmate of a California prison, that segregation based on race was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court allowed an exception only for “extraordinary circumstances required to maintain inmate safety.”

With upwards of 10,000 inmates in several different jail facilities at the sprawling Pitchess Detention Center, Sheriff Baca's segregation order took several days to implement. Then, too, it is nearly impossible to separate prisoners by race at all times. This meant another two weeks of sporadic fighting and dozens more injured. The number of blacks hurt, according to one inside source, was more than double the

number of Latinos. As the fighting continued and it became ever more impossible to deny or minimize the racial element, Baca began revealing what his intelligence sources had told him. Gang leaders on the outside, said Baca, “made phone calls to Hispanic inmates directing them to attack blacks. It was all directed to go down at a particular time Saturday. All the fighters were ready.”

For several days following the outbreak of violence, fighting had been confined to the Pitchess Detention Center. Then, on Friday, Feb. 10, nearly 50 brown and black inmates at the Men's Central Jail went at it, the fighting occurring in individual cells. The cells often have six or more inmates each and, as at the detention center, Hispanics outnumber blacks two-to-one. Again, whites remained out of the brown-on-black assaults.

In one of the cells was Sean Anthony Thompson, a 38-year-old black repeat offender, who had arrived in jail only two days before when stopped for running a red light and found to have rock cocaine in his possession. In the cell also were another black and four Latinos. One of the Latinos evidently stayed out of the fighting. When deputies were able to subdue the brawling, Thompson complained of chest pains and shortness of breath. A short time later he was dead. “My brother was outnumbered,” cried Trina Thompson. He was also morbidly obese, weighing something over 300 pounds, and suffered from high blood pressure. In addition to Thompson's death, 10 other inmates were

injured in the fighting, four requiring hospitalization.

While the racial brawling continued day after day, Jody Kent, co-ordinator of the ACLU Jails Project, argued that conditions in the jails were the principal problem and not race. "Yes, race has become a visible and unavoidable part of the power structure in the jails," she said. "But only when tension is allowed to peak—as it has now—does chaos follow."

Chaos, though, is not an accurate description of what has been occurring in the jails. The attacks are brown-on-black only and are well co-ordinated. Sheriff Baca has stated repeatedly that the attacks followed orders from the Mexican Mafia. If everything in this scenario had been the same, except substituting white for Latino, would Kent be arguing that race is not the principal factor? I suspect that Kent and the ACLU would be wailing about racist whites attacking blacks. In this instance, however, since only people of color are involved, political correctness demands that Kent and company minimize or deny racial reality.

Also in denial is Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke. "This has been blown up as a black-on-brown thing," she exclaimed. "Apparently, it was not initially. ... I'd like to know if the Aryan Nations was involved." I suppose Burke, who is black, meant to say brown-on-black and Aryan Brotherhood. More realistic was Supervisor Gloria Molina, best known for using millions of dollars of taxpayer money for a Mexican cultural center in Los Angeles. "We've had those tensions out there now," she said. "It's gang on gang. Black gangs and Latino gangs. It will spill out. ... It will be very dangerous for L.A."

Although Molina got the racial element right, she was wrong about the direction of the spilling. There have been racial brawls between Latino and

black students that have closed down several Los Angeles high schools at different times during the last few years, and on the streets Hispanic gang members have been killing black gang members at record rates. In previously predominately black South Central Los Angeles and in Compton, Latinos are taking control through both numbers—illegal immigration has added a million Hispanics to L.A. County just since 2000—and violence. This, in turn, has meant a dramatic shift in the jail populations as well. The sheriff's department saw it coming during the 1980s, when clashes between Latinos and blacks became ever more common as the numbers of Latinos incarcerated started to surpass those of blacks.

On the inside, be it a jail or a prison, everything eventually comes down to race. It is tribal, and the warfare is savage. In Los Angeles County jails, blacks have lost their dominance, which they had acquired through high rates of crime and incarceration beginning in the mid-1960s. Before that, jail and prison populations in California, reflecting the general population, were largely white. By the late 1960s, however, the criminal activities of groups such as the Black Panthers and several newly emerging black gangs meant not only that there were large numbers of blacks behind bars but that they were fairly well-organized. Their racial attacks on whites caused no great alarm or cries for federal intervention or commissions to study the problem. By the 1970s, with illegal immigration from Mexico flowing into California unchecked, after being a mere trickle during the 1950s and '60s, Mexicans began a steady increase in their jail and prison populations as well. Mexican gangs on the outside—some of them had long histories in East Los Angeles—meant that Mexicans had a degree of organization on the inside also.

This left whites to fend individually for themselves, a less than effective tactic in jails and prisons. It was under these conditions that the Aryan Brotherhood was born. At first it was composed largely of Irish-American inmates, especially from the San Francisco bay area. They were often the sons of Irish who had immigrated to the Bay Area following World War II and worked as laborers or in the trades. Kevin Mullen, who became a San Francisco cop in the late 1950s and would eventually become deputy chief of the SFPD, told me the Irish kids were especially tough and enjoyed fighting. Moreover, when behind bars they saw no reason to defer to black or brown inmates or suffer humiliation, beatings, or death. Initially, it was required that a member of the Aryan Brotherhood be at least part Irish. Members of the organization often sported tattooed Celtic crosses. Why it wasn't called the Celtic Brotherhood, I don't know.

The emergence of an organized body of whites in jails and prisons caused federal investigations, political diatribes, lectures on racism, and candlelight vigils. There was no ACLU outcry about conditions in the joint. The whites were racist, of course, for defending themselves. Behind bars we "live in a mean, ugly world," said Michael Patrick "Big Mac" McEhiney, one of the leaders of the Aryan Brotherhood. Unfolding at the moment in federal courtrooms in Los Angeles and Santa Ana is the largest capital case filed in U.S. history, aimed at breaking the Aryan Brotherhood, whose activities over the years have grown well beyond defending themselves. Let's see if the same level of federal involvement—if any—will result from the brown-on-black attacks in California's jails and prisons. ■

Roger D. McGrath is an historian in California and the author of Gunfighters, Highwaymen and Vigilantes.

The Radical Lasch

The Marxian social historian saw past the limits of liberalism to a true middle-class populism.

By Jeremy Beer

HAD NATURE TAKEN a more typical course, Christopher Lasch would still be with us. Only 61 years old when on Valentine's Day 1994 he succumbed to cancer in his Pittsford, New York home, Lasch died while still in his intellectual prime. The book for which he may be remembered longest, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics*, had appeared just three years earlier. And he had just finished, with the aid of his daughter Elisabeth, the manuscript of *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, in which he attempted to bring into focus the problems posed for authentic democracy by the detachment of the new privileged classes, both physically and ideologically, from common men and women.

In *The Revolt of the Elites*, Lasch foretold the red-blue political divide that would preoccupy political commentators a decade later. "The new elites are in revolt against 'Middle America,'" he warned, "imagined by them to be technologically backward, politically reactionary, repressive in its sexual morality, middlebrow in its tastes, smug and complacent, dull and dowdy"—as precise a summation of the average coffeehouse intellectual's grievance against flyover country as one is likely to find.

Lasch's lament would seem to be that of a cultural conservative, and by the end of his life Lasch wore that label fairly comfortably, hewing to a populism that emphasized the need to nurture the institutions and practices associated with traditional communities and, especially, the

need to acknowledge human limits. He realized that it was just such an acknowledgment that our cosmopolitan, hypermobile, liberated elites had rejected, even as they consolidated their control over politics, economics, and culture.

But Lasch had once been closely associated with the political Left, and part of what made, and continues to make, his analysis so arresting is that he never entirely disavowed such influences as progressivism, Marx, and Freud. Unlike the Left's other postwar exiles, he never underwent a Damascene ideological conversion but gradually and reluctantly came to shed certain leftist presuppositions. Lasch never became a Cold Warrior, in contrast to those of his peers who migrated from *Partisan Review* to some form or other of neoconservatism. And unlike Irving Kristol, he was not prepared to muster even one cheer for capitalism. Instead, his work confirms the truth of historian T.J. Jackson Lears's observation that "the most profound radicalism is often the most profound conservatism."

To turn to Lasch's *oeuvre* today is to be struck forcefully by its refreshing independence. Lasch managed to be at once democratic and antiliberal. Negatively, his criticism was founded on a theoretically rich, psychologically informed understanding of class, consumer capitalism, therapeutic culture, and technology. Positively, it was based on a respect for—and an ardent wish to defend—the unenlightened, traditional values and preferences of the *petit bour-*

geois: family, hard work, loyalty, craftsmanship, voluntary association, ethnicity, sport, moral clarity, and faith. It all added up to, in his words, a thoroughly "unclassifiable political equation."

* * *

Before he became a radical historian, Christopher Lasch—or Kit, as he was known by his friends, family, and colleagues—was an insightful historian of radicalism. His first major work, and one that still repays reading, was *The New Radicalism in America, 1889–1963*, wherein he foretold the rise of the detached class of elites that he would target for blistering condemnation in *The Revolt of the Elites*.

Lasch contended in *The New Radicalism* that the creation of an intellectual class in the first half of the 20th century was problematic because it reflected—was in fact a consequence of—the "cultural fragmentation that seems to characterize industrial and postindustrial societies." The radical intellectuals he profiled saw themselves as standing against the bourgeoisie, whose educational practices, culture, and sexual relations they intended to reform.

The bigoted elitism of these "new radicals," argued Lasch, consigned them to political ineffectuality. And their obsession with overcoming the intangible repression that they believed characterized the bourgeois family made them nearly incomprehensible to laymen: "The revolt of the intellectuals had no echoes in the rest of society," he con-

cluded. On the contrary, far from being too powerful, for Lasch it was the very weakening of the traditional family brought about by the growth of the state and the industrial economy that generated the revolt of the intellectuals and their free-floating anxiety.

In the decade following the publication of *The New Radicalism in America*, Lasch wrote as a Marxian social critic. But even so, his distrust of alienated intellectuals and his commitment to defending the virtues and habits of common men and women usually

Note that Lasch emphatically did not believe that the family was a “haven in a heartless world,” as is often thought—a misreading, or rather non-reading, of his book that he lamented. Lasch believed precisely the opposite: that the conditions of modern life—its wars, commerce, politics, social decay—were such that the family was less able than ever to serve as a refuge from the outside world, even as that role was more necessary than ever.

Lasch explained that larger social institutions had expropriated activities

nonetheless very much a book of its time—especially in its despairing, pessimistic tone. Liberal culture, which seemed “in its decadence to have carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a war of all against all,” seemed to be on the verge of suicide. Borrowing a term from sociologist Philip Rieff, Lasch argued that “psychological man” had become the characteristic human type of the new therapeutic age. Psychological man had been effectively liberated from the allegedly repressive, authoritarian bourgeois order only to find himself enslaved by his own seeming ethereality and the paternalistic state.

The defining characteristic of psychological man was his anxious narcissism. The diagnostic symptoms included “dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by others, combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings,” not to mention, less directly, “pseudo self-insight, calculating seductiveness, nervous, self-deprecatory humor.” So much was understood by a number of psychoanalytic theorists. Lasch’s contribution was to reveal the extent to which contemporary social conditions both helped create and reflected the rise of the narcissistic personality.

In the final pages of this rich and densely argued book, Lasch distinguishes his critique from that of conservatives, whom he faults for refusing to connect the social and personality changes described by Lasch with “the rise of monopoly capitalism.” To Lasch, therapeutic and consumer culture are intrinsically—and historically—related via their connection to the rise of corporate capitalism. “The same historical development that turned the citizen into a client transformed the worker from a producer into a consumer.” To struggle against the narcissistic dependence associated with the new therapeutic

WITH THE 1977 PUBLICATION OF *HAVEN IN A HEARTLESS WORLD*, THERE BEGAN A LOOSENING OF LASCH’S ALREADY TENUOUS TIES WITH LEFT-WING ORTHODOXY.

allowed him to keep a certain distance from the least plausible aspects of Marxist ideology. With the 1977 publication of *Haven in a Heartless World*, there began a substantial loosening of Lasch’s already tenuous ties with left-wing orthodoxy. Taken together with *The Culture of Narcissism* and *The Minimal Self*, it represents the first entry in Lasch’s trilogy of psychological critiques of late 20th-century culture.

In *Haven*, Lasch confronted his growing “doubts about the desirability or even the feasibility of an open-ended experimental approach to sexuality, marriage, and childrearing.” *Haven* attempted to defend the family on the basis of two premises: the first was that the family has a crucially important role in the shaping of personality; the second was that certain personality traits are more compatible with democracy than others. Thus, wrote Lasch, those economic, cultural, and political forces that have weakened the bourgeois, nuclear family have had profound consequences because they have also altered the personality development of the rising generation.

once undertaken by families. Industrial capitalism took production out of the household. Capitalism then appropriated workers’ skills and knowledge, replacing them with scientific management and an efficiently structured, bureaucratic, hierarchical work environment. At the same time, workers’ private lives came increasingly under the control of medical, social, and governmental authorities. The result was that people had become highly dependent on corporations and the centralized state in nearly all matters, which reduced them to a degree of servitude incompatible with the ideals of democracy. The most important of such changes, for Lasch’s purposes in *Haven*, was “the expropriation of child rearing by the state and by the health and welfare professions.”

The Culture of Narcissism built on the argument offered in *Haven* by applying its insights to American culture’s “malaise,” a word that would attach itself with merciless persistence to the Carter years. A true virtuoso performance, one of those rare books that manages to sustain real originality for several hundred pages, *The Culture of Narcissism* was

bureaucracy would mean to resist also the dependence created by corporate capitalism. Lasch therefore concluded his book by exhorting his readers to look to the “traditions of localism, self-help, and community action”—in other words, to resist the forces of narcissism by seeking “to create their own ‘communities of competence.’”

The timing—and title—of *The Culture of Narcissism* could not have been better. Jimmy Carter’s pollster Patrick Caddell was greatly impressed by it and recommended it to the attention of the president, who allegedly speed-read it and had it in mind when he delivered his famously catastrophic “malaise speech” in July 1979. Lasch had achieved national stature as a culture critic—and had inadvertently helped to wreck a presidency.

If anything, Lasch’s next book, *The Minimal Self*, is more fulfilling than its two predecessors. In this book Lasch links his critique of therapeutic culture with the problems of environmental exploitation, industrialism, and technology. Furthermore, he criticizes the social movements of the Left—the environmental, women’s, and peace movements—for, among other things, advocating the abandonment of the concept of the individual self and its fusion with nature or the social whole. Authentic selfhood, argued Lasch, lies in the awareness of one’s divided nature, in the “awareness of man’s contradictory place in the natural order of things.” Indeed, the echoes of a newfound respect for the West’s religious tradition are clearly present in Lasch’s argument that “[s]elfhood is the painful awareness of the tension between our unlimited aspirations and our limited understanding, between our original intimations of immortality and our fallen state, between oneness and separation.”

However, in Lasch’s account selfhood is not threatened so much by these social movements as it is by the therapeutic ideology promoted by mass industrial culture. In frustrating individual initiative and accountability, this ideology teaches individuals not to trust their own judgment, indeed to see the self as an object, while paradoxically seeing external objects as extensions or projections of the self. Though “self-liberation” is the ostensible goal of therapeutic ideology, the liberation of the self from a stable public or common world has revealed more clearly than ever that the self only takes shape in the presence of external constraints, or at least that absent such constraints the imagination is exposed “more directly than before to the tyranny of inner compulsions and anxieties.”

The defenders of mass, consumer culture claim that whatever is lost in its rise is more than made up for by the spread of comforts and wealth throughout all classes, especially the lower, notes Lasch. In other words, the wide array of choices once available only to the rich are available to all in a consumer cul-

choice’ means ‘keeping your options open.’ ... [S]uch is the open-ended, experimental conception of the good life upheld by the propaganda of commodities, which surrounds the consumer with images of unlimited possibility.” Industrialism and genuine democracy, therefore, are anything but mutually reinforcing.

After *The Minimal Self*, Lasch’s break with the cultural Left became more thorough and more obvious. In the 1960s and ’70s, he had been a frequent contributor to organs of Left opinion like *The Nation* and *The New York Review of Books*, publishing in those periodicals 12 and 45 articles respectively. But his last article for *The Nation* appeared in 1980, and after 1984 he wrote only one article (on Reagan) for the *NYRB*. The post-modern Left irritated him, and the feeling was mutual.

In the late ’80s, Lasch began to explore systematically his instinct that the best way to transcend the Left-Right impasse in American life was through the reinvig-

BOTH THE CONTEMPORARY LEFT AND RIGHT HAVE CONTEMPT FOR THE IDEA THAT THERE CAN BE ANY IMMOVABLE CONSTRAINTS ON HUMAN ENDEAVOR.

ture, and so to deplore consumerism is to unwittingly reveal one’s aristocratic snobbery. Lasch rebuts this argument by noting that the choices open to the weakened, dependent selves that pervade consumer culture are trivial, having to do with “lifestyles” rather than matters of moral import. The only choices a consumer society will accept are those that are nonbinding and hence relatively meaningless. “A society of consumers defines choice not as the freedom to choose one course of action over another but as the freedom to choose everything at once. ‘Freedom of

oration of the populist tradition. This was the thesis of *The True and Only Heaven*, which begins by noting that both the contemporary Left and Right have contempt for the idea of limits of any kind, since the idea that there can be any immovable constraints on human endeavor threaten the underlying belief in “progress” to which both subscribe. Even conservatives, he observes, have all but abandoned whatever residual “skepticism about progress” they may once have harbored.

The idea of progress appealed to so many because it envisioned a future of unlimited economic growth. But it was

also attractive because it had been finally detached from utopianism. Lasch saw that the most viable progressive ideology—the only one to emerge intact from the rise and fall of the modern era’s revolutionary and totalitarian regimes—was the one created by the new science of political economy in the eighteenth century. Its prophets were Bernard Mandeville, David Hume, Adam Smith—the heroes of classical liberalism, not Marxian radicalism. For Smith *et al.* promised not utopia but the indefinite expansion of prosperity, a lower but seemingly much more achievable goal.

Lasch’s great contribution is to show that even this more modest project requires the dramatic alteration of traditional moral valuations. For one thing, unlike the classical, Christian, and republican traditions, “the modern conception of progress depends on a positive assessment of the proliferation of wants.” Austerity and self-denial have no place in the modern, progressive conception of the good life. For “thrift and self-denial” mean nothing less, ultimately, than “economic stagnation.” Desire and appetite, on the other hand, must now carry a positive valence. Formerly condemned as potentially insatiable and therefore subject to a panoply of private, public, and religious constraints, for there to be progress desire and appetite had now to be continually stimulated. Furthermore, this progressive ideology, by proposing a world continually improving and without end, necessarily entails the institutionalization of a sense of impermanence, the sense “that nothing is certain except the imminent obsolescence of all our certainties.”

Lasch’s book attempts to highlight the most important critics of this new idea of progress while showing that the most effective criticism can be traced to the populist tradition and its preference for a rooted life centered on family, neighborhood, and church. In this sense, *The*

True and Only Heaven may be regarded as Lasch’s attempt to provide a pedigree for a more radical, more democratic—and more consistent—brand of cultural conservatism. Indeed, as he argued in a revealing 1990 article titled “Conservatism Against Itself,” for Lasch the populist tradition he hoped to rejuvenate was the natural home of cultural conservatives, so long as they truly wished to be associated with “a respect for limits, localism, a work ethic as opposed to a consumerist ethic, a rejection of unlimited economic growth, and a certain skepticism about the ideology of progress.”

By the same token, Lasch had little interest in movement conservatism and what he saw as its illogical embrace of consumer capitalism. As early as 1987, in a symposium on “humane socialism and traditional conservatism,” he had called on cultural conservatives “to take cultural conservatism back from the capitalists,” a call he repeated elsewhere. And with regard to foreign policy, Lasch was surely right when he noted that “when the adversary” is cast as embodying “total evil,” the “imperfections” of democracy naturally fade ... from sight,” leading to the rise of an uncritical, ultimately unpatriotic American nationalism. Surely we see the same process repeated today, with Islamism conveniently substituted for communism.

* * *

When, in a 1991 interview, Lasch was asked where he saw signs of “hope” or “moral vision,” he responded that while there was “not much” present in organized religion, “one finds flashes of it in the Catholic tradition. ... One might even say that the Pope has some of the best insights into social questions”—a rather surprising answer for a former Marxist imbued with radically secularist ideals from childhood.

But Lasch’s self-identification with the project of cultural conservatism in the final decade or so of his life had been accompanied by an increasing, if still tentative, attraction to the Christian intellectual tradition. His social thought began to incorporate a consideration of religion and theological insights in highly suggestive ways. For example, turning Freud on his head, Lasch used psychoanalysis to argue that the man or woman of genuine faith actually possessed a higher degree of psychological maturity than did the religiously indifferent. And, putting a twist on the work of Eric Voegelin, he published a series of articles in the early ’90s arguing that Gnosticism, the perennial heresy, was not manifested so much in utopian totalitarianism as it was the assumptions and implicit goals of liberal modernity.

Much more might be written about the theological affinities present in Lasch’s later cultural criticism. Readers of *The True and Only Heaven* will note their existence in his treatment of the virtue of hope, in his championing of religious thinkers such as Jonathan Edwards and Orestes Brownson and activists such as Martin Luther King Jr., and in his critique of abortion rights. The spiritual depth and sincerity of Lasch’s writing is impossible to miss.

For all that, Lasch never claimed publicly to be a believer. Privately, however, things may have been different. After Lasch’s death, one friend recalled that Lasch had once been asked by a participant at an evangelical conference, “Are you or are you not a believer?” Lasch was said to have replied, “Oh, not really.” His wife, however, having heard the question, quickly interjected, “Oh, yes he is!” ■

Jeremy Beer is co-editor of American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia, just released from ISI Books. A version of this piece appeared in Modern Age.

Suburban Commandos

The miliarization of local police puts innocents at risk.

By William Norman Grigg

LOCAL POLICE in Fairfax, Virginia suspected that Salvatore Culosi Jr., a 37-year-old optometrist, was running an illegal gambling operation. On Jan. 24, after a three-month undercover investigation, police sent a tactical squad to Culosi's home to execute a search warrant. For reasons yet to be explained, the unarmed Culosi was shot and killed by a TAC squad member—an outcome tantamount to summary execution for allegedly taking sports bets in a state that has a government-run lottery.

The officer who fired the lethal shot was identified by Fairfax Police Chief David M. Rohrer as a seven-year veteran of the tactical unit. In a Jan. 25 press conference, Chief Rohrer expressed “condolences and sincere sympathy to Mr. Culosi’s family and friends” and promised “to conduct a comprehensive, balanced and fair investigation” of the shooting. But he also expressed “my support for the officer involved. He is a 17-year veteran of our department and he is a valued member. My support goes out to him and his family.”

Had the roles been reversed—with the officer being mistakenly shot and killed by Culosi—it’s impossible to believe that Chief Rohrer would have displayed similar evenhandedness between the shooter and the victim. It’s doubtful that criminal charges will be filed against the officer for needlessly killing Culosi, who was accused of a nonviolent offense. Nor is there any indication that the Fairfax County Police will re-evaluate the wisdom of its current policy requiring that all warrants be served by a heavily armed TAC squad.

In recent years, commented policy analyst Radley Balko in a Feb. 7 *Washington Post* op-ed, paramilitary tactics “once reserved for rare, volatile situations such as hostage takings, bank robberies, and terrorist incidents increasingly are being used for routine police work,” such as gambling raids, including an April 2005 raid on a poker game in a Denver suburb. What we are seeing, according to Peter Kraska of Eastern Kentucky University, is the “normalization” of militarized police work. Where SWAT teams and similar outfits were once “peripherally part of a police organization,” they have now been integrated seamlessly into standard police operations, “such as serving search warrants, doing patrol work, serving arrest warrants.”

The militarization of local police has resulted, in large measure, from the war on drugs, in which no-knock raids and armed seizure of forfeited properties have become very common—as have incidents in which innocent people have been injured and killed as a result of those raids, which are often carried out on the word of anonymous informants.

Ismael Mena, a 45-year-old father of nine from Denver, was killed by a SWAT team in 1999 after a tip from an anonymous informant resulted in a no-knock raid on the wrong address. Wisconsin resident Scott Bryant was gunned down by a SWAT team under nearly identical circumstances. And 70-year-old Boston resident Accelyne Williams, a drug counselor, died from a heart attack after masked men broke into his home, thrust him to the floor, and shoved guns into his

face while screaming at him. The masked assailants, predictably, were from a paramilitary counter-drug unit acting on a tip from an informant who was not only anonymous but also intoxicated.

When innocent civilians perish at the hands of police paramilitaries, criminal charges very rarely result. But the case of Cory Maye of Prentiss, Mississippi illustrates that civilians who use lethal force to defend themselves enjoy no such immunity.

Late in the evening of Dec. 26, 2001, Maye was startled awake by the sound of intruders in his duplex. Fearing for his 18-month-old daughter, Maye grabbed his handgun and went to confront the eight armed men who had broken into his home, lethally shooting one of them in the abdomen. The mortally wounded prowler was Ron Jones, a 29-year-old Jefferson County police officer who was part of a SWAT team conducting a no-knock armed raid on the basis of an anonymous tip.

Maye, who had no criminal record apart from a few trivial traffic citations, was not the target of the raid; the warrant was for the other half of the duplex. The officers attempted to enter that home by what they believed was a side door but was actually an entrance to Maye’s side of the duplex. Maye claims that the officers never identified themselves as police. His reaction is entirely predictable: he was a young father of an infant daughter, living in a bad section of town, facing a party of armed intruders. Yet he was arrested and convicted on a felony murder charge, and is now on Mississippi’s death row.

Under both Mississippi state law and the state's constitution, Maye committed no crime. The state's law on "justifiable homicide" specifies that lethal force can be used "in the lawful defense of one's own person or any other human being, where there shall be reasonable ground to apprehend a design ... to do some great personal injury, and there shall be imminent danger of such design being accomplished."

The relevant Supreme Court precedent, the 1900 ruling *John Bad Elk v. U.S.*, recognizes that when an officer of the law "is killed in the course of [a] disorder which naturally accompanies an attempted arrest that is resisted, the law looks with very different eyes upon the transaction when the officer had the right to make the arrest, from what it does if the officer had no such right. What might be murder in the first case might be nothing more than manslaughter in the other, or the facts might show that no offense had been committed."

If Maye's conviction stands and his sentence is carried out, an ominous precedent will be set. Victims of wrongful no-knock raids are already treated as little more than collateral damage in the war on drugs. The Cory Maye case indicates that those who defend themselves in such desperate situations are to be regarded as little better than terrorists or insurgents.

At the time of its birth nearly 40 years ago, SWAT was intended to forestall the militarization of police not to facilitate it. Daryl Gates, the former chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, is credited with devising the concept. As Gates explains in his memoir *Chief: My Life in the LAPD*: "Whereas the military will go in with bazookas and blow the place apart, SWAT's main objective *always* is to get everybody safely out. If anybody gets killed or injured, the operation's a failure..."

SWAT had its baptism of fire in a December 1969 firefight with members

of the Black Panther militia in South Central Los Angeles. A police officer, responding to neighborhood complaints about noise blasting from a loudspeaker at the Black Panther headquarters, had paid the Panthers a visit—only to be chased away by gun-wielding thugs. An arrest warrant was issued, and a large SWAT team was sent to serve it. Tipped off about the raid, armed to the teeth, and ensconced in a heavily fortified building, the Panthers held off the SWAT team for hours. Three officers were wounded, one of them shot six times.

Anxious to break the impasse and bring the firefight to an end, Gates put in a request to Camp Pendleton for a grenade launcher, fully understanding the grave implications of that request. The commanding officer at Camp Pendleton informed Gates, "You're going to have to get permission from the Department of Defense and probably the President of the United States." Eventually the request was approved, but the Panthers surrendered before the grenade launcher was deployed—much to Gates' relief.

SWAT was born amid the urban riots and related violence of the late 1960s as a way of dealing with armed robberies, hostage situations, and the threat of domestic terrorist groups like the Black Panthers and the Symbionese Liberation Army. By the late 1990s, notes Cecilia Weber, a writer on law enforcement and criminal justice, "nearly 90 percent of the police departments surveyed in cities with populations over 50,000 had paramilitary units, as did 70 percent of the departments surveyed in communities with populations under 50,000."

While SWAT-type tactical teams have proliferated, the institutional and ideological barriers separating law enforcement from the military have nearly been eliminated. Observes Weber, "Congress has encouraged the US military to supply intelligence, equipment, and training to

civilian police. That encouragement has spawned a culture of paramilitarism in American law enforcement."

Where Daryl Gates was informed in 1969 that procuring a single grenade launcher may require presidential authorization, the federal government now routinely equips local police tactical squads with cutting-edge military gear. "The Pentagon has been supplying [tactical] units with M-16s, armored personnel carriers, and grenade launchers," reports Weber. "The police paramilitary units also conduct training exercises with active duty Army Rangers and Navy SEALs." Adds Eastern Kentucky University's Pete Kraska: "Our research showed, in fact, that almost 50 percent of police departments today are engaged in some kind of training with military special operations experts currently."

Predictably, police tactical teams now focus on occupying and dominating a battlefield rather than protecting and serving a community. This is reflected in comments offered by a member of a metropolitan police tactical team who took part in a national survey.

"We're into saturation patrols in hot spots," the officer explained. "We do a lot of our work with SWAT units because we have bigger guns. We send out two, two-to-four-men cars, we look for minor violations and do jump-outs, either on people or on the street or automobiles. After we jump-out the second car provides periphery cover with an ostentatious display of weaponry. We're sending a message: if the shootings don't stop, we'll shoot someone."

Coming from a Marine detachment patrolling neighborhoods in Fallujah, that message is understandable. Coming from local police in the United States, it portends the arrival of a garrison state. ■

William Norman Grigg is the author of four books and senior editor of The New American.

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*Night Watch*]

From Russia With Blood

By Steve Sailer

RUSSIA'S TRIUMPHANT RISE from cultural backwater to dazzling center of creativity and profundity during the century before the Bolshevik Revolution was mirrored by its sad decline under Communism. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 might have been expected to unshackle Russian artistry, but over the last decade and a half, little has emerged that has caught the attention of the West.

Still, hope for a Russian aesthetic revival endures, so when the film "Night Watch," the first of a planned trilogy that has set box-office records in Russia, finally reached America, the Saturday evening crowd at an art-house cinema in West Los Angeles solemnly took it in as if it were the second coming of *Crime and Punishment*.

In reality, "Night Watch" is a clever and entertaining—if confusing and not at all scary—commercial fantasy film about supernatural undercover cops who arrest vampires. While reminiscent of the great Mikhail Bulgakov's long-banned 1930s novel about the devil's visit to Stalin's Moscow, *The Master and Margarita*, it's actually closer to the TV show "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and last year's Keanu Reeves theological thriller "Constantine."

"Night Watch" is built on the current

Hollywood economic model. It's a special-effects-encrusted and lavishly advertised blockbuster that has spawned a franchise. Of course, the financial scale is tiny by comparison: "Night Watch" cost all of \$4 million to make and reaped \$16 million at the Russian box office. Fortunately, a dollar goes a lot farther in Russia, and "Night Watch" looks terrific. The computer-generated imagery is professional, and Moscow's grubbiness has never been depicted so slickly. While "Night Watch" is a pastiche of American hits, there's a distinct Russian flavor and a crucial anti-abortion plot twist that Hollywood wouldn't touch.

As veteran investigative reporter Edward Jay Epstein documented in *The Big Picture*, television's seduction of the old habitual moviegoer has meant that the studios must conjure up an audience from scratch for each new film, at an average of almost \$30 million in American advertising costs.

Not surprisingly, movie executives therefore try to lessen risk by green-lighting familiar-sounding titles, such as sequels. Unfortunately, this can result in "Matrix" syndrome, where the filmmakers who expended every idea they ever had in their breakthrough movies are exposed as creatively bankrupt when given huge budgets to concoct follow-ups.

An alternative is to plan on shooting a trilogy from the beginning, as in "Lord of the Rings." The downsides, however, of plotting on a three-film scale, from which "Night Watch" suffers, are that the first installment spends an inordinate amount of time introducing plot and characters and never reaches a satisfying resolution.

Loosely based on the first novel in a bestselling trilogy by science-fiction

author Sergey Lukyanenko and directed by Timur Bekmambetov, both born in Kazakhstan, the film expounds a vaguely Zoroastrian dualistic cosmology. The battle between the well-balanced forces of Light and Darkness, fought by mystical Others who dwell amongst us, once became so destructive that in 1342 their leaders negotiated a complex truce. But now this Cold War threatens to turn apocalyptically hot again.

The heroes of "Night Watch" are a grungy squad of Light Other police officers who work at night, apprehending bloodsucking Dark Others who violate the rules. Yet the main characters seem to be willing to break a lot of eggs to make an omelet, dangling innocent humans as "live bait" to entrap the vampires.

How do we know the protagonists actually are the good guys they repeatedly insist they are? The vampires, who on a personal level are often friendly or glamorous, argue that they're just doing what comes naturally when "the hunger" is upon them and seem sincerely aggrieved by the cops' procedural corner-cutting. Indeed, these vampires aren't all that bloodthirsty by the standards set by such prominent historical Muscovites as Ivan the Terrible, Trotsky, and Beria.

It's possible "Night Watch" is an ambivalent allegory of recent Russian history, in which the morose heroes—who espouse high ideals for which the ends justify the means—represent the old Soviet KGB secret police, while the sleazy villains—gangsters, pop stars, and black marketers—embody the new Russian mafioso capitalism.

Or then again, "Night Watch" might be just a cops-and-vampires flick. We'll have to wait for "Day Watch" and "Dusk Watch" to find out. ■

Rated R for strong violence, disturbing images, and language.

BOOKS

[Empire of Debt: The Rise of an Epic Financial Crisis, William Bonner and Addison Wiggin, John Wiley & Sons, 370 pages]

An Empire Built of Paper

By Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr.

TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, when the United States was a modest commercial republic, the president could take a walk down Pennsylvania Avenue—by himself—and talk to anyone who approached him. If he wasn't on a walk outdoors, he was most likely at home, and you could speak to him by knocking on the door of the White House and presenting yourself.

The Hamiltonians and their agenda of mercantilism, paper money, and presidential exaltation had been humiliated in the election of 1800. Jeffersonianism had prevailed against them. And though Jefferson made some missteps during his presidency—not even Jefferson could be fully trusted with power—the policy bias was clear: frugality, free trade, peace, hard money, and decentralized government.

Today? The president moves about like Caesar Augustus, with a vast, graded court of civil and military aides, doctors, secretaries, valets, hairdressers, makeup artists, bodyguards, drivers, baggage handlers, cooks, food tasters, Praetorian guards, snipers, centurions, bulletproof limos, a portable hospital, and an armored rostrum. And that's when he travels in the U.S.

When Bush visited Ottawa, members of Parliament were refused entry into their own legislature by the massed power of the Secret Service, in violation of Canadian law. When Bush visited London, 5,000 additional police were assigned to protect him. Parks and

streets and neighborhoods were closed. Riflemen thronged the roofs. The queen was horrified by the trashed condition of the grounds and great rooms of Buckingham Palace, but that meant nothing relative to the security of the emperor.

He counts far more than any other human being on earth. So, of course, every event is staged to the extreme. The president is spoken to by no regular person. There are as many walls that separate us from him as between the supposed government of Iraq and its people or the old Soviet Politburo and the Russian people. These people live and breathe fear.

The paranoia of the Bush circle has infected the whole regime. The entire government—elected officials, appointed staff, permanent bureaucracy—has shifted in the last decade from pretending to be the people's servants to admitting that they regard the people as a threat. Thus do we see the stream of legislation permitting ever more powers to spy, confiscate, and jail without trial.

Never has sociologist Franz Oppenheimer's view of the state been more clearly on display: it is there to dominate, exploit, and protect itself against any challenges to its power. It clings to power like Gollum holding the ring. And that power is deployed not for the purpose of protecting people but for protecting the state and its interests. When Oppenheimer theorized in 1908 that this was the true nature of the state, he was shouted down and pilloried for denying the doctrine of government as a social compact. Now his claims read like a description of the day's political news.

Most Americans are aware that something has gone very wrong, but they are at a loss to sort out the causes, especially the ones that are most invisible. This is where the smashing book by William Bonner and Addison Wiggin, titled *Empire of Debt*, performs an extraordinary service. In addition to being accomplished financial analysts, Bonner and Wiggin are talented historical writers. And they put this talent to work in the cause of examining the

political and economic effects of empire.

The authors not only provide a frightening picture of the mess that the U.S. government has made at home and abroad, they also understand the crucial role that the monetary regime has played in this debacle. They show how the legal right to counterfeit—that's what the Federal Reserve grants the government—has changed the structure of the government and led to the loss of liberty and the rise of an imperial power unlike any in history.

In the commercial republic of Jefferson, money was gold and silver. Government had no power to print currency. It was not even allowed to tax directly. What money it had came from tariff revenue, and pressure from exporters and importers kept it low. Even if Jefferson had wanted to establish a tyranny, there was no means to do so. If the wall of separation between money and the state was not as high as it might have been, there was still a barrier that put a curb on power-mongering.

Today, however, all the money government could ever want is easily available via a monetary policy that depends critically on the capacity of the Fed to create currency out of thin air. The Fed's printing presses back every debt note issued by the Fed, and the new currency is sopped up by foreign central banks and private holdings around the world, particularly among Asian nations. The dollar is, for now, the world reserve currency, which permits the U.S. to sustain a world empire without paying the price—again, for now.

The critical turning point is one I remember well. Richard Nixon enacted, by imperial decree, a purely fiat dollar, repudiating solemn promises to redeem in gold. After that, with the printing presses running 24/7, the *Pax Americana* could be "financed." To understand the connection requires that we understand two fields of study that are usually kept separate: foreign-policy analytics and monetary economics. It is in understanding this relationship that our authors excel.

Alan Greenspan had pretended to be against it all, but given the chance for power, he happily repudiated his restrictionist gold-standard views and supplied the credit for the expensive wars, the expensive bread, and the expensive circuses that have wrecked empires from Rome to London. His successor promises even more of the same.

With the end of the last remnants of the gold standard, "all the restraints, inhibitions, and modesty of the Old Republic [were] blown away," note Bonner and Wiggin. "In their place has emerged a vainglorious system of conceit, deceit, debt, and delusion," with special financial significance for the country and individuals. The authors note in passing that, for example, the U.S. military could be cut 75 percent and still give the government the biggest, most technologically advanced army in the world.

While the loss of gold money was a turning point, the imperial urge has much deeper roots. It all started, say the authors, when the balmy Teddy Roosevelt began riding rough over small, poor nations. They might have gone back further in time. Robert E. Lee, writing Lord Acton, feared that the federal victory over the South would mean despotism at home and empire abroad. It wasn't too many years later when the religious maniac McKinley launched an attack on Spain, seizing colonies in grand fashion and murdering any natives who objected. Or we might even look back further. The hardcore might even see the United States' imperial career beginning with its conquest and colonization of northern Mexico. Maybe its roots are in the Colonial era with New England's religio-cultural drive to improve and perfect the world through coercion and belligerence.

Regardless of the roots, the modern history is undeniably disgraceful. In the midst of my favorite chapter, "Woodrow Crosses the Rubicon," the authors pause to repudiate the great killer-presidents and to praise instead men like Warren G. Harding. He was pro-peace, and he pardoned the antiwar hero Eugene Debs, who had been jailed and his health

destroyed by Wilson for criticizing conscription. Further, they note that there is no Harding Law, no Harding Building in D.C., no war he started, and no government program he launched.

"Remember," Wilson had proclaimed, "that God ordained that I should be the next president of the United States." How many Americans know that Wilson invaded Mexico before Europe, raising the federal war banner over Veracruz, and set off a reign of terror at home in which Germans, or those thought to be German, were lynched and those who dissented from his national socialism were jailed?

Wilson also established the Federal Reserve, the income-tax police, and the direct election of senators. The latter wiped out an original buttress to states' rights and led to more and more centralization, as senators saw themselves as representatives of D.C. to their states rather than of the state legislatures to the central government. Frank Chodorov called it "The Revolution of 1913."

The Federal Reserve's monetary manipulations to finance World War I, and then the boom of the 1920s, led to the Great Depression and then the Roosevelt revolution towards massive statism. After it and Trumanism and Modern Republicanism, Americans live, said John T. Flynn, "in the war-torn, debt-ridden, tax-harried wreckage of a once imposing edifice of the free society which rose out of the American Revolution on the foundation of the U.S. Constitution."

The impulse to empire helps make sense out of our huge deficits and debts or such costly and obvious blunders as the invasion of Iraq or the war on terror. It is as if America were committing suicide, our authors say, first by bankrupting the economy and then by creating endless enemies all over the world.

With this comes a belligerent and blind nationalism that has affected the whole culture in one degree or another. But then, in an empire, the people must become "hollow dummies," said Orwell. They must believe they are superior to others, and have a right to tell others what to do. Americans seem to go beyond even this. They believe that

other countries actually want to be invaded and occupied and shaped into mini-Americas by the United States. All we have to do is "get their dictators off their backs, and the men will start building shopping malls and the women dressing like Britney Spears."

Did the Swiss puzzle and plot over what kind of government the Iraqis should have? Did they set out to make the rest of the world more like Switzerland and think that other peoples secretly yearned to be Swiss themselves? No, these are imperial inanities.

Paying tribute to *As We Go Marching*, John T. Flynn's great analysis of New Deal fascism, our authors understand the glorification of militarism and war that lies at the heart of right-wing statism. As Flynn quoted an Italian fascist, today's red-state fascists also see the mass death and destruction of war as "the great anvil of fire and blood on which strong peoples are hammered."

Once upon a time France had a great empire. Frenchmen thought they had the best language, the best culture, the best government, the best economy, the best schools, the best builders, the best army. And it was their duty to civilize the globe. Now, after French imperial bankruptcy and the destruction of the franc, we have the *mission civilisatrice* to spread freedom and democracy. Or so the president informs us.

But then, no one's business is too small or too remote to be of no interest to the U.S. state. From its globe-girdling military bases and its world-circling spy satellites, the U.S. watches everything, everywhere, always. Not a sparrow falls without "triggering a monitoring device in the Pentagon."

Yet citizens of the empire exult, just as in Rome:

The average American reacted just as the average Roman had reacted. When the purple was hoisted, he stood up and saluted. It made him feel like a big shot. If Americans were bossing people around in Asia or the Middle East, it made him feel more important. His homeland

team was winning all over the world. And if it did not always seem to be on the winning side, he knew he must support his troops and stand behind their commander-in-chief. No one wants to carp and criticize when soldiers take the field. It is unpatriotic. So, keep the soldiers in the field all the time.

American business is still heroically capitalistic, entrepreneurs brilliant and brave at creatively serving the needs of the people, though hogtied by the vastest government in history. On top of that, every aspect of the economy is distorted by the expansionary policies of the Federal Reserve, resulting—in just one instance—in a huge housing bubble.

Thanks to the incentives created by the welfare state and the Fed, Americans tend to consume more than they earn. Stocks today trade for about 20 times earnings, whereas the norm is 12-15 times. House prices usually increase at the rate of inflation, not 10 times as fast. A global power monopoly is also abnormal. At some point, all the myths cherished by the imperial people, say our authors, must go to “humbug heaven.”

After all, the long-term mean value of paper currency is zero. Is the dollar magic, so that it is permanently immune from the norm? For the last 100 years, it has lost value more quickly than the Roman denarius after Nero. No surprise, since it is much easier to create unlimited numbers of dollars than to mint coins with at least some silver or gold in them. On the other hand, by the time of the last emperor, the denarius—which started as pure silver—had .02 percent precious metal content. That is, the denarius had lost, over hundreds of years, 99.98 percent of its value. Since the founding of the Fed in 1913, the dollar has lost 95 percent.

Something else that will revert to the norm: wages. There is no inherent reason that a plumber with a U.S. flag pin should earn more than one with a crescent moon. In India, real incomes have doubled in the last 10 years. In the U.S. they have been stagnant or worse.

The inequitable draining of the world's resources into America, made possible by the military empire and its financial structure since Bretton Woods, is also coming to an end.

The authors call themselves conservatives, but they quote *Confessions of an Economic Hitman* approvingly and see through the Cold War humbug about the Communist Conspiracy, the terrorism of the previous scam. Nor do they fall for the mythology that surrounds the big-spender Reagan nor celebrate the murderous Vietnam War, with 57,000 dead Americans and between 2 and 3 million dead Vietnamese. Those names aren't on a wall, of course.

The book is chock-full of great monetary and financial charts, though my favorite is a list of all the known empires and their duration. Not that they believe that charts tell the future. Indeed, our authors are contrarians. When most people, they think, are convinced that stocks will never go up, chances are they will. When most people think stocks can never fall, chances are they will. If most people couldn't be brought to the view that houses will never decline in value, a rip-roaring housing bubble would be impossible.

Since the days of the Great Khan, and the barbaric clarity of his claim that the gods had given him the earth and everything in it, empires have resorted to rosier delusions, if no less fatal to victims—and sometimes citizens—than the Khan model. From the Romans to the Fourth Crusade (and their Venetian and French aggressors) to Genghis Khan to the Spaniards and Napoleon and the British, Bonner and Wiggin teach us the lessons of empire, with learning, wisdom, and irony.

“A great empire,” they note, “is to the world of geopolitics what a great bubble is to the world of economics. It's attractive at the outset but a catastrophe eventually. We know of no exceptions.” ■

Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr. is founder and president of the Ludwig von Mises Institute and editor of LewRockwell.com.

[Patrick O'Brian: *The Making of the Novelist, Nikolai Tolstoy*, W.W. Norton and Company, 512 pages]

The Reverse of the Medal

By G. Tracy Mehan III

NIKOLAI TOLSTOY'S new biography of Patrick O'Brian is a useful, if painful, contribution to our understanding of a writer who elevated the popular seafaring tale to the level of truly great literature. Transcending C.S. Forester's estimable Hornblower, O'Brian created something more akin to Jane Austen afloat.

Tolstoy, an historian and distant relative to the novelist Leo Tolstoy, is a devoted stepson of O'Brian. He offers the reader a robust portrait of a deeply flawed human being for whom the world of Captain Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin—ship's surgeon, spy, naturalist—offered a refuge from his own failings and inadequacies.

The Aubrey-Maturin series spans 20 novels, beginning with *Master and Commander* and ending with a partially completed story, *21*, which was published posthumously—“an unforgivable betrayal” by O'Brian's literary estate, in Tolstoy's opinion. They portray life within the circumscribed community of a Royal Navy fighting ship during the Napoleonic War with empathy and authentic detail, recounting not just the routines of life aboard ship and the rigors of war but also the social and cultural realities of the time, on land as well as at sea. While the relatively few combat narratives are without peer, the novels are remarkable mosaics of music, natural history, friendship, and social relations in a bygone era.

This biography, apparently the first of two volumes, includes, as it must, chapters on O'Brian's neglected childhood (his mother died when he was 3); his abusive father; an unfortunate tour in

the Royal Air Force; a failed first marriage; his abandonment of two children, one dying from spina bifida; acrimonious custody battles; his change of name (he was christened Richard Patrick Russ); a tormented relationship with his natural son; a writer's block of many years; and his misleading statements or intimations regarding his sailing experience (probably nonexistent), schooling (only four years, failing all exams), and his Irish heritage (German, actually).

Much of this became public knowledge in the late 1990s. Dean King wrote an unauthorized biography of O'Brian in 2000. Many of Tolstoy's criticisms of King and other journalistic accounts may strike the reader as minor or even pedantic. But there are areas where he brings a crucial, contextual understanding to O'Brian's behavior.

It is true, for instance, that O'Brian could not stomach small children. He also regretted, bitterly, his poverty and lack of social standing. These, no doubt, were the reasons for his leaving his first wife, son, and doomed daughter. Nevertheless, he continued to support them financially. He also paid for the education of his son at private schools and tutored the boy himself. Tolstoy is able to portray this situation accurately without justifying O'Brian's many failures.

Tolstoy, whose mother, Mary Wicksteed Tolstoy, was O'Brian's tether to sanity and creativity for over half a century, brings immense advantages to this enterprise. He knew O'Brian for decades. He acquired the author's library, journals, and letters—even the index cards upon which O'Brian recorded his observations of birds.

In *The Fortune of War*, Stephen Maturin describes a young man suspected of intrigue, whom he had known long enough "to be sure that he was no monster of any kind, except perhaps of erudition." Tolstoy, too, is a monster of erudition whose insights into, for example, the differences between English foxhunting—on horseback and quite social—and the Welsh variety—on foot over mountainous terrain—are illumi-

nating. He provides an excellent portrait of rural life in Sussex, which, in the years before World War II, still resembled the haunts of Jack and Sophie Aubrey.

Tolstoy takes great pains to explore several of O'Brian's "autobiographical" novels and short stories as a means of interpreting his early life, most notably *Three Bear Witness*, *The Catalans*, and *Richard Temple*. They reveal a man scarred by isolation and fear at an early age, not-so-genteel poverty, and an obsessive class-consciousness that account for his attraction to Mary Tolstoy, a wealthy, aristocratic beauty right out of the pages of Evelyn Waugh.

"The fact that Diane Villers and Sophie Aubrey"—the fictional wives of Maturin and Aubrey—"reflect varying perspectives of my mother is but one of several intriguing factors in an extraordinarily close and enduring love affair which lasted for over sixty years," writes Tolstoy. The reader might suspect a bit of bias here, especially in contrast to Elizabeth Jones, O'Brian's first wife, an attractive, poor, uneducated woman from Wales.

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In several places, Tolstoy sheds light on the background to the Aubrey-Maturin series. O'Brian, an avid reader since childhood, collected old and antiquarian books, especially those relating to the history and literature of the "long" 18th century extending from Queen Anne's reign to the Regency. While working for the ambulance service and then the Political Warfare Executive, a propaganda unit, in wartime London, he was drawn to the second-hand bookshops of Charing Cross Road and Cecil Court which "continued to act as an irresistible magnet," according to Tolstoy.

Patrick O'Brian's practical interests were reflected in a collection that

included a 1732 volume on clock-mending, a 1687 book on gardening, an 1838 guide to hunting, and, most fitting for an amateur naturalist, a 1792 title, *A General History of Quadrupeds*, with fine woodcuts from the period. Even his wife, Mary, produced meals from a 1776 recipe book.

O'Brian immersed himself in primary sources. "This led him to an understanding of the radical distinction between past and present and to awareness of the absolute necessity of envisaging men and women within the context of their own era," argues Tolstoy. "Empathy and vivid sense of period were everything..." Like Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson, he treasured "the forgotten humdrum details and unanticipated oddities more intriguing than the deeds of great men and the fate of nations."

Tolstoy also provides an enlightening commentary on an individual deeply respected by O'Brian who embodied the fictional Captain Jack Aubrey. With the end of World War II, Patrick O'Brian was destitute except for a small income from his new wife's family trust. So he moved

their household to a small, remote cottage, Fron Wen, in the mountain valley Cwm Croesor, Snowdonia, Wales.

There the O'Brians spent countless hours outdoors gardening, hunting, fishing, biking, hiking, and birding. The local foxhunt was rooted in a vital tradition and the need to protect livestock. The Welsh name for the hunt was Ynysfor, dating back to 1765. Captain Jack Jones was the Master of the Hunt, "a Welsh squire or 'gentleman farmer' of the old school."

Captain Jones was descended from an ancient North Walian family and Welsh was his native tongue. Jones served in the Great War commanding a company

of local men during the infamous Galipoli landings. He was a respected magistrate, popular for his genial and unpretentious manner. There was little in his appearance or attire to distinguish the Master of the Ynysfor Hunt from his little band of followers, mostly farmers and youths, all of whom hunted on foot over mountainous terrain.

"Jack Jones was a plain-spoken, roughly dressed, soldierly man with no concern for social pretensions. Although approaching his sixtieth birthday and thus nearly twice Patrick's age, he possessed a constitution so tough and resilient as to place him almost invariably foremost in pursuit of the fox," says Tolstoy. He was the first to wield a pickaxe or crowbar upon arrival at the fox's den. He was blunt in speech, and he valued a man "purely by the extent of his contribution to the concerns of the Hunt." He never spared himself.

Remarkably, O'Brian, who was never deferential to authority, "accepted the most peremptory commands and roughest abuse from the Master of the Ynysfor Hunt without a tinge of resentment. "He

CAPTAIN JONES WAS THE **PROTOTYPE FOR CAPTAIN JACK AUBREY**, AN OFFICER WHO ALWAYS LIKED **"A TAUT BUT HAPPY SHIP."**

recognized Captain Jones's instinctive authority and skill as a leader, which is why, in Tolstoy's opinion, Jones "played a more fundamental part in Patrick's fiction than that of affording realism to his descriptions of fox-hunting."

Captain Jones was the prototype for Capt. Jack Aubrey, an officer who, as described in *The Far Side of the World*, always liked "a taut but happy ship" with flogging a most infrequent occurrence. Tolstoy notes, quite accurately, "One of the great strengths of Patrick's portrayal of Jack Aubrey lies in its absence of sentimentality." Like Jack Aubrey aboard the *Surprise*, "Jack Jones exercised nonsense, efficient control over the members of the Hunt."

D.H. Lawrence once insisted: "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale." Despite

Patrick O'Brian's serious personality disorders and human flaws, the reader is left with his remarkable stories of Jack Aubrey and his "particular friend," Stephen Maturin. The most interesting question is how this miraculous literary triumph emerged from the crooked timber of the author's humanity.

Genius is one explanation. O'Brian was essentially an autodidact who, with only the minimum of formal education supplemented by evening classes at London University, learned history, literature, mathematics, art, French, Latin, naval lore, and natural history. Thus, his literary success is a very personal one.

But it is hard to conceive of any genius producing such accomplishments, in the realm of historical fiction at least, absent an underlying culture of learning, tradition, social affection, and humanity as vibrant as that of pre-war Britain, Wales, and also Ireland, whose people and culture he genuinely treasured despite his lack of common ancestry.

This culture is rapidly becoming a mere artifact in the museum of the past. With diminishing population, cut adrift

from its unique history and traditions by multiculturalism, secularism, and political correctness, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Europe generally are experiencing the dissolution of their cohesive culture and society. In *The Abolition of Britain: From Winston Churchill to Princess Diana*, Peter Hitchens warned his countrymen, "a forest that has taken centuries to grow can be cut down in weeks, or even hours, especially if the foresters have grown indolent and slack, and take their charge for granted." ■

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[*Impostor: How George W. Bush Bankrupted America and Betrayed the Reagan Legacy*, Bruce Bartlett, Doubleday, 320 pages]

Counterfeit Conservative

By Doug Bandow

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH took office to the sustained applause of America's conservative movement. In 2000, he defeated the liberal environmentalist Al Gore, abruptly terminated the legacy of the even more hated Bill Clinton, and gave Republicans control of both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. A few cynics were suspicious of Bush's understanding of and commitment to conservative principles, but most on the Right welcomed his inauguration.

Five years later, the traditional conservative agenda lies in ruins. Government is bigger, spending is higher, and Washington is more powerful. The national government has intruded further into state and local concerns. Federal officials have sacrificed civil liberties and constitutional rights while airily demanding that the public trust them not to abuse their power.

The U.S. has engaged in aggressive war to promote democracy and undertaken an expensive foreign-aid program. The administration and its supporters routinely denounce critics as partisans and even traitors. Indeed, the White House defenestrates anyone who acknowledges that reality sometimes conflicts with official fantasies.

In short, it is precisely the sort of government that conservatives once feared would result from liberal control in Washington.

Still, conservative criticism remains muted. Mumbled complaints are heard at right-wing gatherings. Worries are expressed on blogs and internet discussions. A few activists such as former Congressman Bob Barr challenge

administration policies. And a few courageous publications more directly confront Republicans who, like the pigs in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, have morphed into what they originally opposed.

The criticisms are about to get louder, however. Bruce Bartlett has been involved in conservative politics for a quarter century. He authored one of the leading books on supply-side economics, worked in the Reagan administration, and held a position at the National Center for Policy Analysis—until the Dallas-based group fired him, apparently fearful of financial retaliation arising from his sharp criticisms of the administration.

That the truth is so feared is particularly notable because Bartlett's criticism is measured, largely limited to economics. Bartlett notes in passing his concern over Iraq, federalism, and Bush's "insistence on absolute, unquestioning loyalty, which stifles honest criticism and creates a cult of personality around him." These issues warrant a separate book, since it is apparent that Americans have died, not, perhaps, because Bush lied, but certainly because Bush and his appointees are both arrogant and incompetent.

Although modest in scope, *Impostor* is a critically important book. Bartlett demonstrates that Bush is no conservative. He notes: "I write as a Reaganite, by which I mean someone who believes in the historical conservative philosophy of small government, federalism, free trade, and the Constitution as originally understood by the Founding Fathers."

Bush believes in none of these things. His conservatism, such as it is, is cultural rather than political. Writes Bartlett, "Philosophically, he has more in common with liberals, who see no limits to state power as long as it is used to advance what they think is right." Until now, big-government conservatism was widely understood to be an oxymoron.

For this reason, Bartlett contends that Bush has betrayed the Reagan legacy. Obviously, Ronald Reagan had only

indifferent success in reducing government spending and power. For this there were many reasons, including Democratic control of the House and the need to compromise to win more money for the military.

Yet Reagan, in sharp contrast to Bush, read books, magazines, and newspapers. (On the campaign plane in 1980 he handed articles to me to review.) He believed in limited government even if he fell short of achieving that goal. And he understood that he was sacrificing his basic principles

BUSH'S CONSERVATISM IS **CULTURAL RATHER THAN POLITICAL**. WRITES BARTLETT, "PHILOSOPHICALLY, HE HAS **MORE IN COMMON WITH LIBERALS**, WHO SEE **NO LIMITS TO STATE POWER** AS LONG AS IT IS USED TO **ADVANCE WHAT THEY THINK IS RIGHT**."

when he forged one or another political compromise. George W. Bush has no principles to sacrifice. Rather, complains Bartlett, Bush "is simply a partisan Republican, anxious to improve the fortunes of his party, to be sure. But he is perfectly willing to jettison conservative principles at a moment's notice to achieve that goal."

Which means Bush's conservative image bears no relation to his actions. Indeed, reading *Impostor* leaves one thinking of Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*, as if the administration's real record is depicted in a painting hidden from public view.

Bartlett's analysis is devastating. He begins with process rather than substance, Bush's "apparent disdain for serious thought and research to develop his policy initiatives." In this way, Bartlett helps explain why Bush's policies are almost uniformly bad.

As someone who served on a presidential staff, I can affirm that developing policy is never easy. Departments push their agendas, political allies and interest groups fight for influence, and legislators intrude. But the best hope for good policy, and especially good policy that also is good politics, is an open policy-making process.

That is precisely the opposite of the Bush White House, which views obsessive secrecy as a virtue and demands lockstep obedience. Bartlett reviews the experience of several officials who fell out with the administration, as well as the downgrading of policy agencies and the "total subordination of analysis to short-term politics."

The biggest problem is Bush himself, who—though a decent person who might make a good neighbor—suffers from unbridled hubris. His absolute certainty appears to be matched only by his

extraordinary ignorance. His refusal to reconsider his own decisions and hold his officials accountable for obvious errors have proved to be a combustible combination. As a result, writes Bartlett, "Bush is failing to win any converts to the conservative cause."

The consequences have been dire. Bartlett, long an advocate of supply-side economics, is critical of the Bush tax program. A rebate was added and the program was sold on Keynesian grounds of getting the economy moving. The politics might have been good, but the economics was bad. Unfortunately, writes Bartlett, the rebate "and other add-ons to the original Bush proposal ballooned its cost, forcing a scale-back of some important provisions, which undermined their effectiveness." Although rate reductions have the greatest economic impact, rates were lowered less and less quickly.

Bartlett also criticizes Bush on trade, on which he views him as potentially the worst president since Herbert Hoover. "Since then, all presidents except George W. Bush have made free trade a cornerstone of their international economic policy. While his rhetoric on the subject is little different than theirs, Bush's actions have been far more protectionist."

Many *TAC* readers may view Bush as insufficiently protectionist. However, the obvious inconsistency—rhetorical commitment to open international markets mixed with protectionist splurges—is not good policy. Here, as elsewhere, Bush's actions are supremely political, where the nation's long-term economic health is bartered away for short-term political gain.

However, it is on spending that the Bush administration has most obviously and most dramatically failed. Bartlett entitles one chapter "On the Budget, Clinton was Better." Not just Clinton but George H.W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon, and even Lyndon Johnson, depending on the measure used.

In this area *Impostor* makes for particularly depressing reading. The administration is not just spendthrift. It is dishonest. Given the administration's

foreign-policy deceptions, it should come as no surprise that the administration cares little about the truth in fiscal matters. Writes Bartlett:

As budget expert Stan Collender has pointed out, the Bush Administration had a habit of putting out inaccurate budget numbers. The deficit in its 2004 budget appears to have been deliberately overestimated just so that a lower figure could be reported right before the election, thus giving the illusion of budgetary improvement. The following year, the deficit projected in January 2005 was also significantly higher than estimated in the mid-session budget review in July. This led Collender to conclude that budget numbers produced by the Bush Administration 'should not be taken seriously.'

Like the typical Democratic demagogue, Bush has used spending to buy votes whenever possible. In this, of course, he has been joined by the Republican Congress. But his lack of commitment is evident from just one statistic: Bush has yet to veto a single bill. One has to go back almost two centuries to find another full-term president who did not veto even one measure.

In fact, the Republican president and Republican Congress have been full partners in bankrupting the nation. The low point was undoubtedly passage of the Medicare drug benefit, to which Bartlett devotes one chapter. The GOP majority misused House rules and employed a dubious set of carrots and sticks to turn around an apparent 216 to 218 loss. Worse was the administration's conduct. The administration shamelessly lied about the program's costs, covered up the truth, and threatened to fire Medicare's chief actuary if he talked to Congress. The bill is badly drafted and, more importantly, adds \$18 trillion to Medicare's unfunded liability.

In Bartlett's view, this might be the worst single piece of legislation in U.S. history, which would be quite a legacy.

Writes Bartlett, "It will cost vast sums the nation cannot afford, even if its initial budgetary projections prove to be accurate, which is highly doubtful. It will inevitably lead to higher taxes and price controls that will reduce the supply of new lifesaving drugs." In short, an allegedly conservative president inaugurated the biggest expansion of the welfare state in four decades.

Bartlett believes that tax hikes are inevitable, and he offers some decidedly unconservative observations on these issues, including the desirability of imposing a Value-Added Tax. He also speculates on the political future and a likely "Republican crack-up."

But the core of his book remains his analysis of the Bush record. Bush, Bartlett believes, is likely to be seen as another Richard Nixon:

There has been an interesting transformation of Richard Nixon over the last twenty years or so. Whereas once he was viewed as an archconservative, increasing numbers of historians now view him as basically a liberal, at least on domestic policy. They have learned to look past Nixon's rhetoric and methods to the substance of his policies, and discovered that there is almost nothing conservative about them. So it is likely to be with George W. Bush.

It is almost certainly too late to save the Bush presidency. *Impostor* demonstrates that the problems are systemic, well beyond the remedy of a simple change in policy or personnel. There may still be time, however, to save the conservative movement. But the hour is late. Unless the Right soon demonstrates that it is no longer Bush's obsequious political tool, it may never escape his destructive legacy. ■

Doug Bandow is vice president of policy for Citizens Outreach. A collection of his columns, Leviathan Unchained: Washington's Bipartisan Big Government Crusade, will be published by Town Forum Press.

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Ugly Americans on the March



“This is not an easy time to be American. Your motives are questioned, actions vilified, values mocked. ... Many Americans venturing overseas

feel that they are held to be culpable merely for the sound of their accent. ... There is a grave danger in this visceral hostility. The number of Americans who believe the US should mind its own business and let other countries get along on their own has leapt in only three years from 30 percent to 42 percent...”

This editorial comes from the *London Times*, a Murdoch paper, to be sure, but it makes a lot of sense. Many American Winter Olympians must have felt the chill. Never have I heard louder cheering than when tiny Finland outskated and outscored the good old U.S. of A., whose hockey players concentrated on body checks rather than accurate passing and precise shooting. David versus Goliath fans would have had a field day. One side was big, strong, and tried to bully its opponent into making mistakes. The other was smart, swift, and relied on skill rather than brawn. I don't think I have ever rooted against America, but this time I did—just as I rooted against the bragging Bode Miller, who despite being among the favorites in Torino ended up with egg on his face.

Yes, I'm afraid it is a lousy time to be an American abroad. Actually, there's more anti-Bushism than anti-Americanism. I live in Switzerland and England for seven to eight months a year, the rest in New York. I have never seen it so bad, not even during the closing days of the Vietnam War. At least back then we had a big Soviet bear to worry about. Europeans may be lazy and laid back, but they knew whose tanks or bombs would stop the commies if they ever crossed over into Western Europe. For some strange reason, Saddam Hussein's legions never impressed old Europe. Nor did the Taliban. Ergo, Uncle Sam is

now seen as just a big bad bully shoving people around, and if the good uncle can get poor little me angry at his meddling, just think what he's done for traditional America-haters.

Mind you, there's more. Bush's lopsided foray into Iraq started the disenchantment among many Euros who loved and admired America. But then came the Bush style, reflected by his cabinet and his advisers, the dreaded neocons. This churlish, unchivalrous manner offends many Europeans.

I have just finished debating at the Oxford Union against the motion that “Hurricane Katrina blew away the myth of U.S. racial equality.” I was put through the grinder for defending the government and putting the blame where it belonged: the local kleptocracy.

THE ANTAGONISM EMANATES FROM A FERVENT DISLIKE OF THOSE WHO WERE BEHIND THE UNILATERAL AND DUPLICITOUS AGGRESSION IN IRAQ. BASICALLY THE NEOCONS.

No one wanted to know. America, according to the Oxford crowd, is a racist bully who kills Iraqis like flies and lets black Americans die because they're black. Although my side lost gracefully, we all sensed that there was more to it than just Katrina. In the United States, the top 10 percent of income earners receive six times that of the lowest 10 percent. This earnings gap is staggering for most Europeans, especially students ready to go out into the cruel world. In the old continent, the richest 10 percent earn only three times more than the lowest 10 percent.

Much of the aversion toward America is not against the culture, traditions, or values. Many Europeans claim the same

values for themselves. The antagonism emanates from a fervent dislike of those who were behind the unilateral and duplicitous aggression in Iraq. Basically the neocons. Now word is out that Washington wants to get tougher—with Iran this time, now that the administration has learned the difference between the two neighboring countries. Alas, the lessons from Iraq have obviously not sunk in. The “war on terrorism” has now become “the long war,” a fact my colleague Pat Buchanan predicted three years ago.

It is a very typical American belief that assertiveness and threats are essential macho qualities. And this administration is particularly macho and proud of it. Yet bombing Iran would not only escalate the conflict between Islam and the West, it would help recruit terrorists and suicide bombers in untold numbers. Even the threat of an attack is encouraging Muslims to enlist. And the argument does not hold water. Even if Iran did

develop nuclear weapons—and they are far away in the future—the theory goes that it would attack Israel. But Iranians are not crazy, nor does any Iranian leader wish to commit national suicide. The idea is as ludicrous as the one that Saddam was 45 minutes away from attacking us with WMD.

Spite and vindictiveness against America on the part of Europeans hardly seems sensible. Yet the powers that be in D.C. are not helping. Trying to please hard-liners in Israel by starving the Palestinians—because they democratically elected Hamas—is terrorism in itself, or so many fair-minded people see it. The Ugly American is back on the warpath, I'm afraid. ■

“A wake up call that all who care about conservative ideas should heed.”

—Wick Allison, former publisher of *National Review*

CRUNCHY CONS



How Birkenstocked Burkeans,
gun-loving organic gardeners,
evangelical free-range farmers,
hip homeschooling mamas,
right-wing nature lovers,
and their diverse tribe of
countercultural conservatives
plan to save America (or at
least the Republican Party)

★ ★ ★ ★ ROD DREHER ★ ★ ★ ★

ROD DREHER

holds traditionally conservative beliefs but leads a lifestyle that seems awfully ... well, liberal. His 2002 *National Review* cover story explained how “crunchy cons” across the nation are embracing a culture-based, traditionalist conservatism that has been forgotten. Now, when the Republican party is divided over what it means to be a conservative, Dreher’s fascinating book introduces a pioneering way back to the future by reclaiming what’s best in conservatism.